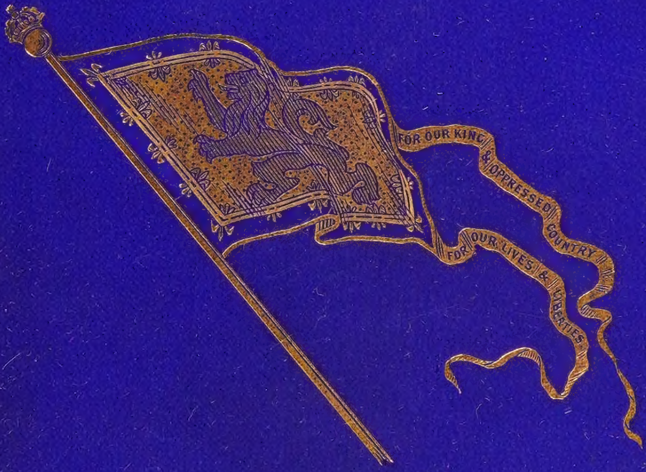
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BALMORAL

A ROMANCE OF THE QUEEN'S COUNTRY

BY

ALEXANDER ALLARDYCE

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'THE CITY OF SUNSHINE,' 'LIFE OF LORD KEITH,'
'SCOTLAND AND SCOTSMEN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,'
'CHARLES KIRKPATRICK SHARPE,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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BOOK I.

A NEW KING AND AN OLD CAUSE

BALMORAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE sunshine of a bright August morning had some difficulty in traversing the dusky Lower Cloister of Westminster, and in struggling into the Dean's dining-room, where the candles had not yet been put out. Between the two lights the apartment had a wan and dismal appearance, the fit environment of as anxious and gloomy a company as ever sat down around a convivial board. The remains of a banquet were still on the table, and though the wine had not been spared, as the host of empty bottles scattered all about testified, it had wrought neither mirth nor revelry. We had sat up all through the night, and morning found us as grey and mute as the mourners at a funeral feast. And, in truth, the gathering was somewhat of that sort, for the Queen was dying at Kensington, and we were waiting in the deepest concern about the next event that was to follow. It was the morning of the first of August, seventeen hundred and fourteen.

It needed only a glance round the room to guess what was the object of this gathering. There were most of the leaders of the opposition to the Succession Bill, the men whose names were written in the darkest characters in the books of Walpole and Baron Bothmar. There were Wyndham, Packington, Shippen, and Tom Forster, men who trusted rather to parliamentary intrigue and party manœuvres than to open force for the furtherance of their aims. There was Sacheverell, whose eloquence could rouse the London mob; and the equally tall and lean form of Carte, who had come in during the night with a message from the Duke of Ormond. There were military red and blue coats, among the wearers of which I knew by sight Captain Silk the muster-master, Captain Wright of Wimbledon's Horse, and a loud-voiced Major Oneby, a notorious duellist and tavern-ruffler. And there were one or two Scotch lords of very faded appearance, who seemed the only persons determined to make the most of the Bishop's wine. But little talk went on, and what was said was spoken in a low tone without any attempt at general conversation.

The seat at the head of the table was vacant, and frequent glances were cast towards a door that stood slightly ajar behind it. For our host the Bishop of Rochester had been called out some time ago, and we waited in expectation that his return would be accompanied by news which might remove the suspense that weighed upon every one present like a heavy burden.

The gathering was the fruit of Atterbury's own bold and courageous mind. He had declared his intention of proclaiming King James at Charing Cross, whomsoever the heralds might proclaim at St James's; and he had invited a number of his Jacobite friends to accompany him and lend him the protection of their swords. Such a bold stroke, if backed by the adhesion of the Tory Ministry, seemed a very likely course for securing the capital to the exiled king.

"The Bishop tarries long, Mr Bardolph," whispered Sir William Wyndham to me. "I fear he has no good news, or some fresh misadventure may have happened."

"Atterbury is not easily daunted," I answered in a low tone; "if it had depended upon him, we should have been in the streets already."

"Even so," replied Sir William; "the Bishop is a bold man, but no statesman. One of the true old breed of English prelates, whose cope only serves to cover the harness. But he is too rash, Mr Bardolph. We must not move further than the party can follow us. I wish we heard something from Harley or Bolingbroke."

"The last tidings were very dispiriting," put in Edward Harvey of Combe; "Argyll and Somerset are ordering everything in the Council, and never leave the ante-chamber for an instant. Shrewsbury is playing politic, and Bolingbroke is sullen. That is what Lewis wrote me this morning when he said the Queen was at her last gasp."

"And Harley?" said Wyndham, meditatively.

"Harley!" rejoined the other, with a doubtful shrug of his shoulders; and all were again silent.

At last the door to which so many glances had been directed was flung open with a loud crash, and Atterbury, his keen face flushed with passion, and with an open letter in his hand, hurried in. Behind him came Captain Smith of the fourth troop of the Horse

Guards, who had come straight from Court with news.

"My lords and gentlemen," cried the Bishop, "our good Queen is with God, and may He acquit her of what wrong she may have done or been forced to do. Our enemies are in action, and the odds are heavy against us. But the loyalty of England is on our side, the true gentlemen of England are with us, the Church, whose cause is at stake, blesses our aims; and all we want to do is to appeal to the country in the name of our rightful King. What, gentlemen! shall we see lawful succession, and right divine, and the Church of England, all extinguished together by the blare of a herald's trump?"

There was no immediate response to the Bishop's appeal. Every one looked in doubt and silence on his neighbour. Only one or two of the captains, upon whom the wine had not missed effect, filled their glasses again and drank to the health of King James.

"What says the Earl of Oxford, my lord?

Have you heard aught from St John?" Sir William Wyndham at last slowly asked.

"What, Sir William?" cried the Bishop; "who knows better than yourself what formalists are statesmen? Think you this a time for making up a cabal, for elaborating intrigues, for writing despatches and memorials? Our ministers are men of wisdom, not men of action; we must leave them to work in their own way,—let us work in ours. Gentlemen, if you will honour me with your company to Charing Cross, I myself shall proclaim our rightful King, the only true Defender of the Faith, though every Whig in London and Westminster should stand by with drawn sword to gainsay his claim. How say ye, my lords and gentlemen, shall we forth?"

A low murmur, half of doubt half of dissent, ran round the assembly, except among the captains, who were now waxing pot-valiant, and who gallantly clattered the hilts of their swords as they pledged another toast to King James. Dr Sacheverell, indeed, with upturned eyes, and a murmured "*si consistant adversum me castra, non timebit cor meum,*" said, "I shall attend you, my lord, having already drunken of the chalice of persecution. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

But the Bishop looked beyond him with bent and gloomy brows towards a group that had gathered round Sir William Wyndham, and were talking earnestly and all together in low and muttered tones. Wyndham had just gathered himself together to speak, and had turned towards the Bishop, when Corbet Kynaston, another member of the House, and an ally of St John, rushed into the room.

"For God's sake, my lord Bishop, do nothing rash! I bring you a note from the Secretary, who is in the utmost concern at this gathering, and fears that your rashness may utterly wreck the cause. I bring you this from him."

Bishop Atterbury looked over the letter, which was but a few lines scrawled on a scrap of paper, and crumpled it up in his hand with an unepiscopal adjuration that made us all start in alarm.

"Gentlemen," he cried, laying hold of the table to support him in his agitation, "the finest cause that was ever fought for has been this day wrecked by the weakness of its leaders. Had there been one man with a head, heart, and hand in her Majesty's Council, the Elector would have arrived to find King James securely seated on the throne. We might yet," he continued abstractedly, talking more to himself than to his audience—"one bold stroke—but no, I am a Churchman, a preacher of peace. Gentlemen, I have only to say that we can do nothing further at present for his Majesty's interests; but I hope the day is not far distant when your loyalty will be put to the proof. I need not say that for your own sakes the sooner we break up this meeting the better."

And indeed the guests were manifestly of the same opinion, for many of them were settling their wigs and adjusting their rapiers as they moved towards the door. But Major Oneby, draining a decanter, cried out in a swaggering tone, "By G—d, things are come to a pretty pass when a score of proper gentlemen toast the King a whole night, and then go quietly home like old women from Dan Burgess's meeting-house, without slitting a single Whig throat! Stap my vitals! if I don't run the first Whig I meet through the body unless he drinks King James's health—and on his bended knees, 'fore G—d!"

"Silence, sir!" said Sir William Wyndham, sternly; "the affairs of a kingdom are not to be settled in the same fashion as you would settle a tavern quarrel for a chair next the chimney-corner. The cause is the cause of gentlemen and men of honour, and not to be disgraced by bullying and ruffling."

The red-faced Major clapped his hand to his sword, but a couple of brother officers forcibly led him to the door, muttering tremendous oaths, and vowing to drink Wyndham's blood, while the baronet calmly watched his exit with haughty contempt. He then approached Atterbury, who stood at the head of the table, too much absorbed to mark the dispersion of his guests. Anger, despair, and contempt seemed struggling to each gain the ascendancy on his countenance, which clearly betrayed the working of all these passions in turn; and it was with difficulty that he sufficiently mastered himself to enter into conversation with Sir William. They debated long and earnestly, but without much result or mutual satisfaction, if their faces and gestures were to be trusted—the Bishop angry and vehement, Sir William apologetic and irresolute. I could not help thinking how often the world is misfitted, and how much more useful the Bishop would have been as a partisan minister, while Sir William with his formality and dignified caution would have admirably ruled a diocese.

I had retired into a window recess, and was moodily gazing out into the Cloister, watching the play of light and dark in its dusky recesses. A silence as of death had fallen around us, and I seemed to be standing by the grave of a dynasty. The venerable shades were a fitting place for such an august sepulture. We had missed our chance, and I for one believed that it was our last chance. Had James Stuart been able to anticipate George's arrival, I am convinced the English nation would have given him a chance. Had the Ministry preserved their courage to the last, they might have completed the policy towards which they had been indirectly working ever since the fall of Marlborough. But now they had failed, weakened by their own dissensions, and overawed by the bold promptness with which the Whigs had intervened. It was a miserable, a pitiful ending of a great project; and I lingered on, in hope that the Bishop's friendship for me would give me an inkling of how we now stood. So I remained there in the silence that was hardly broken by the murmured arguments of the Bishop and Sir William, and thinking of the hubbub and excitement that by this time would be aroused outside the Cloisters as the death of the Queen and the succession of the Elector ran from mouth to mouth along the town. By this time half the Whigs would be uproariously drinking the new King's health, while the poor Tories sought comfort for their grief and despair in French wines and strong waters. But no breath of outside popular commotion broke the quiet of these peaceful shades.

I was not mistaken; for when Wyndham had taken his departure, Atterbury came up to me, and putting his hand on my shoulder, told me all. The "all" was simple enough, and might have been easily foreseen. Harley had not the nerve for decided action; Bolingbroke, like all intriguers, would never take a direct way when a roundabout road was open. The quarrel between the two prevented any common action, and the strong and firm position which the Whigs had taken up had overawed both, as well as their respective followers.

"We have lost a grand occasion," said the Bishop. "The pacific Harley has missed the chance of effecting a bloodless restoration. He is like the 'poor cat i' the adage,' letting I will not wait upon I would. Well, he is a lost man; for even if he escape the Tower, he will never obtain office under the Hanoverian. And as for the supple St John—bah! who can tell what colour the chameleon will wear when you next look at him? He may be the Elector's right-hand man before six months are over, or his head may be rotting on Temple Bar ere as many weeks. But all is not lost while there are true men in the country to fall back upon. We must wait, wait, my dear Bardolph—wait and plot; though it is this very plotting and intrigue that are dragging into the dirt all that is honourable and all that is noble in us. But our betters will have it so; and we—well, we, if we are to be of any use, must work with the tools that are put into our hands in such times."

And the Bishop with knit brows and clenched fists fell into a deep reverie, from which I ventured to arouse him to take my leave, divining that he would wish to be alone to think over his ruined projects. Offering my services in any capacity in which they might be of use, and begging that I might be employed in any undertaking that would be of service to the cause, to which Atterbury replied by an encomium on my zeal and fidelity, I silently pressed his lordship's hand and departed.

Out in the streets I began to gather my thoughts together, and to realise that I too, like most of our party, had had my own private interests involved in the ruin of our plans. I should lose my place under Government—that was certain ; for a new king would assuredly turn to the men who had supported his title and secured him in the succession, and I had been too closely associated with the pronounced Jacobites to merit or receive any consideration from a Whig Government. There were debts, too, pressing me, which I had hoped to find some means of ridding myself of in an altered order of things; but now all my hopes were crushed, and I only saw before me the prospect of being worse off than ever. The feelings of a baffled Catiline or a Sejanus were preying upon me as I came out at Charing Cross.

The news of the Queen's death had spread with marvellous rapidity, and the whole city was astir with excitement that Sunday by noon. The streets were thronged with excited politicians, all eagerly discussing the question of the hour. The tavern doors were blocked by crowds pressing in to quench alike their curiosity and their thirst, and to gather the last wild rumour that had been set afloat,—whether it was that Ormond had been already sent to the Tower by the Lords Justices, or that the Pretender had just disembarked at Deptford, and was hurrying on with an escort of King Lewis's guards to seize upon St James's. From Young Man's Coffee-house there came loud sounds of merrymaking and vociferous cheering as health after health was drunk to King George and the Duke of Marlborough; and as I passed by, an officer was thrown out with torn coat and broken sword, who had had the temerity to drink to "High Church and Ormond." The Whig partisans had given the order for free treating at all their mug-houses, and their bounty was being liberally and noisily taken advantage of. Quidnuncs of a higher order were hurrying along to their favourite coffee-houses, hopping like sparrows from one side of the street to another as they saw an acquaintance who might happily have some morsel of information to impart. Here was a fanatic prophesying the downfall of the Papacy and the speedy approach of the end of the world, to all who would consent to stay and listen to his ravings. There were half-a-dozen men with lowering faces and talking in low tones, whom one could easily judge to be adherents of the exiled dynasty. Every one seemed to be busy and excited, thinking of everything excepting of her who had but a few hours ago been the ruler of these realms. Queen Anne was dead, and London was making it an excuse for a holiday.

With these bitter thoughts in my mind, I was coming along the Strand, when whom should I see at the door of the Fountain but my uncle, Sir Robert Bardolph? A second glance made me think that the good knight had been overtaken by the prevailing excitement, and indeed that, early as it was in the day, he was somewhat disguised in liquor. There was an air of jauntiness and hilarity about him which he seldom wore, except when in the saddle and following the hounds. His wig was awry; his old hat, with the King William cock, even more on the back of his head than ordinarily; his steinkirk rumpled as though he had slept in it, and his waistcoat little more than half buttoned. I had not known of his being in town, and crossed over to greet him.

Sir Robert had just entered the tavern door as I tapped him on the shoulder; and he turned round as briskly as a young man of twenty, and grasped my hand with a hearty squeeze.

"What! Ned, my lad: glad to see ye. Great doings, is it not? A wonderful woman for her time of life. Odds my body! I did not think she had it in her."

"A wonderful woman indeed," said I, thinking he was alluding to her late Majesty, though I conceived his tone was hardly that which became so mournful an occasion. However, what could you expect of an old country knight who had never seen the Court since the last year of King James's reign? So by way of giving him a lesson, as I had frequently to do when he took a turn about town, I said somewhat severely—

"It has been by a melancholy dispensation of

Providence that her death has happened at a time when true patriots could take so little advantage of it for the good of the country."

"Death be d——d!" retorted my uncle, staring me blankly in the face. "No more dead than you are. The doctor told me mother and child were both doing well before I left the lodgings."

I took another look at him, and felt little doubt but that the national calamity had set my uncle's never very clear wits a-woolgathering, and driven him to seek solace in strong waters, as had been very markedly the case, I recollected, when the news of Marlborough's being made a Duke became public. I glanced compassionately at him, and advised that we should walk together to his lodgings, as being a more fit place than a public ordinary where to reflect upon the melancholy occasion.

"Melancholy occasion!" re-echoed my uncle, with a last-century oath. "Do you call the birth of a boy, a Bardolph, an heir to the baronetcy, a melancholy occasion? Ah! I had forgotten. It does put your nose out of joint. But you're not of the blood to bear malice, I'm sure. 'Tis a fine likely lad, with black hair and the squab nose of the Bardolphs,—just like mine own," and my uncle fondly tapped that organ, which might be justly called "squab," and in which pattern I was devoutly thankful that nature had not moulded my own, though it was a family characteristic.

"You do not mean to tell me, Sir Robert," said I, with withering slowness of articulation, while I fixed my eyes sternly on his fuddled visage—"you do not surely mean to tell *me* that your wife, Dame Moonlight—I beg her pardon, my Lady Bardolph—has had the inconceivable wickedness to bear a son?"

"Indeed she has, Ned," returned Sir Robert, gleefully rubbing his hands. "I did not think she had it in her. Five-and-forty come next Hallowmas if she is an hour. A most wonderful woman!"

I almost reeled in the tavern doorway. The death of the Queen, the loss of my place, were all as nothing compared with this blow. Here had I been brought up from my boyhood to regard myself as the undoubted heir to the Bardolph baronetcy, and the manors of Culmford and Prior's Grange in the county of Notts; and happy in this belief, I had been able always to face immediate difficulties with a light heart. Now all my expectations were in a moment shattered by this uncalled-for appearance of a squab-nosed cousin upon the stage. As I thought of my ruined future, I hated my uncle while he stood there before me with a beaming face on a day when every loyal Englishman ought to have been plunged in grief at the affliction and humiliation that had befallen the country, and I felt that I could have "blasted him with my eyes," as they say in the play-house. But what would that have profited me so long as Dame Moonlight and her squab-nosed brat continued to encumber the earth?

"I see you take it sorely, Ned, my boy," said the baronet, at last realising my discomfiture; "but how could I help it? What is done can't be undone. Come and let us drink the child's health in a cool tankard. I shan't forget you, I promise you. Better take to the Church, my lad. It's light work and good feeding. Shalt have the living, of course, after thy father goes; and I'll give you a hundred pounds or so after Martinmas, and do something about these debts of yours. Why, man, the little 'un is your own flesh and blood. He has got the true Bardolph nose, just like yours or mine, and it is red at the tip already."

"My own flesh and blood!" sneered I, bitterly. "How do I know? It does not seem very likely at this time of day. We have heard enough about warming-pans ere now. How comes it that a woman should have a child, and that child a boy, just when she has turned of five-and-forty and has been three years married? She has had plenty of opportunities the last half-score of years, I believe."

"D——n!" cried Sir Robert, bridling up; "it is like your infernal impudence to say so. But I won't lose my temper on a day like this with any one. Come to the lodgings and see the boy for yourself, and then deny if you can that he is your own true cousin. He has got Bardolph printed in his face as much as you have; more so, for he hasn't got your d——d high cheek-bones and sandy hair that come from your mother's Northumberland family. I say, come home and see little Bobby and his mother, and we'll drown all ill feeling in a cup of milk-punch, which will cool your spleen."

"I shall choose a more suitable occasion for paying my compliments to my Lady Bardolph, or Dame Moonlight, or whatever it pleases her or you that she should be called. I have no taste for caudle. My lawyers shall look into this matter."

"*Your* lawyers, you impudent dog!" roared

Sir Robert, now fairly losing all command of himself. "What has a beggar like you to do with lawyers? You never had a lawyer in your life, except when you were raising *post-obits* on Prior's Grange. See how you will pay them off now. You shall rot in the Fleet before I lift my little finger to help you. You—you——"

"I am your most obedient, Sir Robert," said I, with my best bow and a sweep of my hat. "I have more important matters to think of than Madam Moonlight's eccentricities;" and drawing myself up, I stepped out of the tavern door into the street with my grandest air. I heard my uncle shouting after me a tirade of the deepest old-fashioned oaths of King Charles's days until I had almost reached Temple Bar.

CHAPTER II.

I HAD always accounted myself a bit of a philosopher, and had a rare collection of sage apothegms culled from the wise ancients, which were ever very much at the service of my friends when they needed support or consolation. But the shoemaker can less easily fit himself than his customer; and doctors, I have observed, dislike taking their own physic. I used to marvel at the shallowness of mind which failed to be moved from the contemplation of its misfortunes by the divine words of Plato or the finely poised consolations of Cicero. But such medicine seldom works when you take it internally. Philosophy, I suspect, has a double code—one for yourself, and one for your neighbours.

Plato, at all events, made honour and riches a chief condition of happiness; and Aristotle bluntly declared that virtue without the goods of fortune was not sufficient for felicity. As I sat in a gloomy reverie in my rooms in the Temple, I felt the truth of the Stagirite's proposition. Virtue I doubtless had—more than enough to wrap myself up in; but my goods of fortune had been carried off at one fell swoop, and I was keenly, intensely miserable.

That you may all understand what my feelings were at that time, I shall set down my circumstances in brief. I had been brought up to consider myself the heir of my uncle, Sir Robert Bardolph of Culmford and Prior's Grange in Nottinghamshire, and until the instant when a squab-nosed cousin appeared on the scene I never doubted of my position. Sir Robert had never been considered a marrying man in our part of the country. In his younger days he had attempted to make some figure at the Court of King Charles, and was even believed to have fallen in love with some one of the bevy of beauties that graced or disgraced that light assembly. He had even tried to make headway by shaking his elbow, but had lost a fair round sum of money without gaining any Court favour; and soon came back to Culmford vowing that all the men at Court were rogues and thieves, and all the women jades and worse. He had then settled down to the management of his property, which his short career in London had considerably crippled; rode regularly to hounds, got drunk with the justices at every meeting, and kept an open table; in short, was acknowledged by all his neighbours on our side of the county to be an estimable and exemplary country gentleman.

Sir Robert, though a sworn foe to matrimony, was no misogynist, and the rise of Joan Moonlight to a place of trust and influence in Culmford Manor House did not surprise his friends and relatives. Joan was a strapping lass going well through the thirties when

Sir Robert, attracted by her merits, first promoted her to be assistant to old Dame Grubb, who had been *gouvernante* at the Manor since his mother's death, and who was by that time whole deaf and parcel blind, and who soon after was laid in Culmford Priory churchyard, at the feet of her old master and mistress, Sir Robert's revered parents. Mistress Moonlight, very soon after she became housekeeper at the Manor, showed that she was a woman of authority. She smartened up the maids, who, indeed, had been but a parcel of sluttish wenches under old Dame Grubb's feeble sway; her rule was felt in the stables, and as far as the farm; and even Master Beeswing, the ancient butler, who had been an autocrat in his own department for a quarter of a century, treated her with grave respect and styled her "madam." As to the numerous bottle companions and hangers-on whom Sir Robert was constantly bringing home with him from hunting meets and markets, a choice collection of broken-down cavaliers, horse-copers, and younger sons, they one and all paid court to Joan, toasted her vociferously, tried to snatch a kiss when Sir Robert was not in the way, and paid her many pretty compliments besides. Such cupboard love had at sundry times been carried the length of insisting on Joan seating herself among them at table, as we had heard with amazement at the Rectory; and that my uncle had not scrupled to give a benignant assent.

The rise of Mistress Moonlight was watched at the Rectory with much curiosity and not a little anxiety. My mother's moral sense was offended, and she would have my father interfere in his twofold capacity. As Sir Robert's only brother and next heir, he ought, she pointed out, to tell him that the position which his housekeeper held was becoming the talk of the country, and that people were laughing at a man of his station having fallen a prey to a designing red-faced country frump. That as rector of the parish, and set over Sir Robert in things spiritual, it was still more his bounden duty to remonstrate with him upon the sinfulness of the presumptive relations that existed between him and Mistress Moonlight, on the scandal caused to the Church, and the evil example set to the parishioners. "And what he can see in a coarse barn-door wench like that, with a face like a beef-steak and arms like oars, and—and——"

"The Squire was never remarkable for taste, my dear. He thinks himself a better judge of a horse, but I always knew more about the points of a woman," my father had replied, looking complacently upon my mother's pretty face,—when she was young people said she was the very image of the fair Mrs Middleton,—"and as for saying anything about the matter, hum-ha, least said is soonest mended. No doubt it is unpleasant for us, but things might be worse. *Si non caste, tamen caute,* was Lord Clarendon's maxim—the Lord Chancellor, my dear, a great authority, and her most sacred Majesty's grandfather; and it is doubtless better that anything of the kind should happen under the privacy of his own roof than that scandal should be caused abroad as in the matters of Dame Toltby and the horse-doctor's daughter. I am not a man either by nature or by my office to make little of offences against religion and morality, and I would not spare to speak if it were necessary, no matter how near the offender were to myself or how highly placed. But it all comes of the religious corruptions introduced by the Eighty-eight, and the degradations inflicted upon the influence and authority of the Church; and, um—ah, well—in fact there is another thing," concluded my father, striving not to look conscious—"as long as the wench keeps her grip upon him, there is no fear of him marrying."

This last argument did more to make my mother wink at the relationship of Sir Robert and his housekeeper than any other apology that could have been offered for the irregularity; and the Rectory shut its eyes to what was going on at the hall, or if compelled to give an opinion, unhesitatingly attributed it to the evil condition of the country arising from the exile of its legitimate sovereign, and the lax principles disseminated by Bishop Burnett and other Whig prelates. I should have said that both Sir Robert and my father, although they described themselves as Tories, were staunch well-wishers to the king over the water. My father had taken the oaths at the Revolution with considerable difficulty, and only in order to save his flock from being handed over to the care of some schismatical and Whiggish preacher, whose soul-destroying doctrines might have brought to nought the fruits of all his previous labours. For this reason my father regarded himself as a martyr and a confessor; and his annual sermon on the 30th of January was a masterly denunciation of setting up a monarchy on a human instead of a divine basis. When this famous discourse was published by Mr Barber shortly after Dr Sacheverell's business, his defence of divine right and passive obedience was so powerful that some thought the Whigs would prosecute him, while others were convinced that the Queen could not help offering him a Deanery. But in the hubbub made by Sacheverell's sermon my father's publication was still-born, though he gave a copy to everybody in the parish; and all who could read — and some who could not, out of vanity — brought their copies to church with them every anniversary of King Charles the Martyr, and checked off the Rector as he read, to see if anything new had happened since last it was preached. In due time I had been sent to Christ Church, my father's college, where he had been a contemporary of Atterbury, and had enjoyed the lifelong friendship of that distinguished Churchman. I cannot say that my scholarship reflected any increased lustre on Wolsey's famous foundation; but I was well seen of Dean Aldrich, and as I had a light hand at rhyming, he set to music one or more catches of mine that met his fancy. He carried his kindness to me so far as to vainly endeavour to teach me tobacco, and if I could have learned to smoke and have mastered his Compendium of Logic, I would have quite answered his good expectations. As it was, I left the university with the character of a young man of good parts and sound principles; and furnished with recommendations to Atterbury, who was then Dean of Carlisle, but mostly living in London, the centre of a brilliant circle of scholars, politicians, churchmen, and wits, I took up my residence in town.

My future career had been the subject of many councils at Culmford, and frequent *pourparlers* had passed between the Manor and the Rectory on the subject, in the course of which no doubt had ever arisen that I was destined to be my uncle's heir after my father had paid the debt of nature. My father and I had agreed that while he would take the title, as he needs must, I was to enter at once on the estates when my uncle died, allowing him a thousand pounds a-year from the rents. My uncle, however, insisted that I should follow some profession, and though neither my father nor I could see much necessity for such a course, we thought it well that Sir Robert should be humoured. I accordingly entered myself of the Inner Temple, ate my dinners, acquired a small modicum of law, and was duly called to the Bar. But as for practice, no solicitor ever dreamed of offering me a brief, nor would I have had the courage to profit by such rashness if any one had done so. My prospects—the patronage of Atterbury, and I hope I may say my own disposition—made me free of the best circles of the coffee-houses, and introduced me to the notice of the famous wits of the day. When I published my ‘Occasional Pieces,’ I was kindly complimented on them both by Mr Pope and by the Dean of St Patrick's, which more than made up to me for the indifference of the public, and the ribald sarcasms of such hireling scribblers as Dennis, Oldmixon, or Eustace Budgell.

As had always been intended, my uncle brought me in for Culmford in the elections of 1710, and I became a member of Parliament, and a zealous though silent supporter of Harley and St John. My good principles, and the recommendations of my friends, made it clear that I ought to be provided for, and the post of Comptroller of the Rum Vaults in the Victualling Office for the Navy on Tower Hill was conferred upon me as an earnest of something better to come. For this I got £400 annually, but had to give £50 to a deputy for doing my duty; although my substitute could have well afforded to give his services gratis, for there were very handsome pickings a-going in his department at a time when a ship was no sooner paid off than it was put again in commission. I stood manfully by the Ministry all through the last four years of the Queen's reign, and if I did not speak much, I wrote a good deal; and my pamphlets against the Whigs and in defence of the Peace, and my lampoons on the Duchess of Marlborough—though, I admit, a long way behind the writings of Dr Swift—were highly commended at headquarters, and many flattering promises were held out to me in consequence.

I have not yet mentioned another uncle who interested himself in my fortunes—my mother's brother, Alderman Thirlwall of the City of London. The Alderman, the younger son of an old and ruined Northumberland family, had come to London when a boy, and engaging in merchandise, had made a great fortune. He had correspondents both in France and Spain, and had also engaged in the young trade and manufactures which had begun to spring up in the Scotch seaports since the Treaty of Union. He had turned a Papist in King James's time, and had lost his civic dignity at the Revolution; indeed the Thirlwalls had ever been but conforming Protestants, with the exception of my good mother, who, as became the spouse of a rector, was a zealous Churchwoman. Mr Thirlwall's Jacobite leanings were no secret in the city and beyond it, and grave suspicions had been cast upon him at the time of Berwick's plot, and in the matter of Sir John Fenwick. But my uncle was a wary man, and one that was not easily entrapped; he was also a man of worship and influence in the city, and though excluded from the Guildhall, he could do much with both aldermen and common councillors. Especially in the long peace negotiations had he proved himself serviceable to the Ministers, his knowledge of France and his extensive dealings with that country enabling him both to give information and to render direct assistance; and but for his religion he would doubtless have been raised to the dignity of knighthood. He kept one of his sons abroad, ostensibly as a commercial correspondent—but really, it was whispered, as an emissary of the Chevalier de St George, who communicated with his friends in this country through the Thirlwalls, father and son. But however this might be, no open accusation of treason had ever been sustainable against him; and indeed when Harley and St John were at the head of affairs, it was no grave crime to correspond across the water.

I shared my uncle Thirlwall's confidence without being implicated in any of his schemes; and he always rather threw cold water upon my wish to get into the inner circles of active Jacobite plotters, who were constantly coming and going between London and St Germains or Bar-le-Duc, and advised me rather to attach myself to those who were seeking to bring about a Restoration by constitutional means, promising that my loyalty should be fittingly represented in the proper quarter, and my zeal rewarded when the right time came. Thanks to my uncle's recommendations, I was cordially received by the best Jacobite society, and had access to all the great Tory houses; and my second volume of verses, 'The Exile, and other Poems,' had a popularity in party circles little less than the pieces of Mat Prior, which were coming out much about the same time in the old 'Examiner,' though Mat's have survived, while mine are now as dead as the cause in which they were penned. The Chloes, the Phyllises, the Dorises, and the Sylvias who figure in my pages, were no mere ideals of fancy. These damsels of the White Rose caused me many flutterings; but, alas! they were mostly as poor as they were high-born, and the changing times were neither for marrying nor for giving in marriage.

But there was one marriage took place about that time which boded ominously for my fortunes. My uncle Sir Robert, not having the fear of God before his eyes, and the devil him inciting thereunto, was married to Joan Moonlight by the Whig vicar of Humley. Why on earth he should have taken such a superfluous step, considering his oft-repeated abhorrence of matrimony, made something more than nine days' talk to the whole of our country-side. The news fell like a thunderbolt on the Rectory. My mother's moral sense was mortally shocked. In her Christian charity, though reprobating Joan's position in Sir Robert's household, she tolerated the woman, had showed her various small civilities on her visits to the Manor, and had even imparted to Joan her famous and mysterious receipts for brewing double ale and pickling gherkins. But the arrogance and base ingratitude of Mistress Moonlight stung my mother to the heart. She took to bed for a whole afternoon, and rose to make a solemn vow that never would she speak to Sir Robert again; never would she set foot inside the Manor House again; never would she consent to walk into a room behind that —that hussey. If the country had been properly governed—if King James had been on the throne, as he ought to be—such a disgrace could not have befallen the family; and my good mother went even the length of hinting that Mistress Moonlight must have cast spells upon Sir Robert, and that not so very long ago more innocent women had been sent out of the world with the aid of a tar-barrel. But finding that Joan could neither be handed over to the executioner nor sent to beat hemp in Bridewell, as had happened to many a more honest woman, my mother was forced to console herself by stirring up all the ladies in the neighbourhood against the iniquitous couple at the Manor, and obtaining from them a promise to ignore the new Lady Bardolph. And this they were nothing loath to give, for Sir Robert had never taken any trouble to make himself agreeable to the wives and daughters of his neighbours.

My father, as was to be expected, took the matter in a much more searching and philosophic spirit. In the letter which he wrote to me breaking the news, he thus discoursed:—

"How truly hath it been said by the Ethnick poet—

> '*Raro antecedentem scelestum*
> *Deseruit pede pœna claudo.*'

For me I have sinned, and am punished. Instead of discharging my duty as a priest by keeping up the discipline of the Church and correcting the criminous in the case of my brother and that besom, I wilfully shut my eyes, being loath to stir a camarina that would raise an evil odour, or to let loose the tongue of scandal against my own family. And lo you! how quickly and heavily hath punishment overtaken me! Last Wednesday thy uncle and Joan Moonlight were married privately by the Vicar of Humley, a man whom I consider little better than a hedge-priest or buckle-beggar, he never having been within the walls of a college, and deriving such orders as he hath from the hands of Dr Burnett, who is more a Presbyterian than a Churchman. The sons of Korah have seized upon our altars, and Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire, because there is no king in Israel; and as touching this woman, Dame Moonlight—for I shall never call her sister—she hath evidently gotten a masterful hand over thy uncle, and hath inveigled him into this disgraceful match; and what better he could be for it every one about here is asking his neighbour. Thy mother hath taken it sorely to heart, both on thy account and for the affront which it offers to us; but cheer up, my dear lad! there will be no children, for if there had been to be any they would have appeared long ago; and so I hope to live to see you yet settled at the Manor House,—for though he may burden the land with a jointure, he cannot, thank God, divert the old house and its acres from the natural heirs.

"And now a word to thee—there are times when we must all temporise in private as well as in public matters, and I would not have thee quarrel with thy uncle. Human nature is fallible and ought to be forgiving, as indeed we have the highest authority for saying. I myself, gravely as he hath wronged me, will not turn my back upon my erring brother, and I would have you bear with him in a like spirit. I do not think he will reduce your allowance, nor refuse to pay the debts of which I heard with pain, being unable to aid thee through the difficulty I have in getting in my tithes in these godless and disloyal days. So therefore keep friends with him, and I shall watch over thy interests as best I may. But as Joan will doubtless get her big hands into my brother's money-bags, I would have you look out for a wife with fortune, and I am writing to my brother Thirlwall to cast his eyes about him in the City for a suitable match. Trusting that you will bear this dispensation with becoming resignation, and that you will act prudently as touching your uncle, and sending you my blessing and your mother's love, I rest your loving father,

"RALPH BARDOLPH."

My father was right, for Sir Robert's marriage made little change in my relations with him, and he continued to pay me my allowance as before, and to give me such extra help as from time to time my circumstances and my extravagances rendered necessary ; for one cannot frequent the society of wits and men of fashion, or enjoy the company of ladies at Pharoah, spado, or quadrille without a tolerably well-filled purse ; and at the Manor things went on as before, except that Dame Moonlight now sat openly at the head of the table in the quality of Lady Bardolph, and that her stuff housekeeper's gown had given place to a wonderful apparel of lace and furbelows, and a high head-gear that might have struck terror into the heart of any other man save her husband. My mother adhered to her resolution in never setting foot within the Manor — a slight about which Sir Robert gave himself no concern. My father and he lived in their usual amity, save at the annual quarrel over the tithes, which always cooled down in a week or two. And as for myself, I was cordially welcomed to the Manor, the only difference in my reception being that I now kissed Lady Bardolph formally on both cheeks, whereas I had previously been wont to chuck her under the chin and give her a hearty smack on the lips, which had been duly acknowledged by a "fie for shame, Master Edward!"

And now all was changed. The appearance of this squab-nosed boy to cut me out of the Manor and of the title, had destroyed in a minute all my views and all my hopes in life. I had quarrelled too with my uncle, rashly, and as I felt ungratefully; for really he was not to blame in the matter, further than that he ought never to have married. Then the miscarriage of our political plans had removed the only chance that existed of my being able to do anything for myself. I would lose the Comptrollership of the Rum Vaults, the salary of which would have been more than ever acceptable under my changed circumstances. That of course would go to some Hanoverian hanger-on, for I had been too much marked as a Tory, and too greatly suspected of Jacobitism, to hope for anything under the new king. It would be enough if I escaped punishment for such little plots as I had been engaged in, and if I were not implicated with friends who had been more deeply involved than myself. I cursed my fate, I cursed the times, and I cursed above all my ill-temper and folly in quarrelling with my uncle; but all my curses converted themselves into reproaches on my own head, who had idled away my time and neglected my opportunities, because, forsooth! I had foolishly thought that my life was provided for. And now I did not know which way to turn myself, or what to do. My seat in Parliament I must of course lose. Sir Robert would give it to another; and even though he allowed me to be again returned, I would not be able to afford it. My father, though well off and with a good living, had never saved money, for he had a fine taste for French wines and a dainty table, and an open hand to all who came to him for help. He would of course assist me; but the utmost that he could spare would be a pittance compared to the income I had for some years enjoyed. I cursed the Peace, and myself for supporting it; otherwise I might have found a creditable release from my troubles in the wars in Flanders, and been provided for by the butt-end of a Bavarian's musket. My uncle Thirlwall would be glad to help me, I knew, and would find me employment in one or other of the schemes with which he was connected for bringing back the royal exile; but I had seen too much of the Jacobite emissaries who flitted between France and Lorraine and this country to be enamoured of the life. Putting up at obscure taverns, and slinking about the streets like a debtor with a bailiff on his scent; talking loudly in Tory coffee-houses and making great promises on an empty pocket; giving away public places and offices with the profusest liberality, and borrowing a Jacobus to settle the lodging-house bill; closeted to-day with a statesman and cut to-morrow in the streets; and last of all Newgate, or a flight by night in a collier or empty wine-boat,—all this I had seen to be the lot of King James's zealous agents, and my loyalty in no way went the length of wishing to share their privations and perils.

There was one other bitter drop in my cup which had yet to be drained, and in my dejected state of mind I had very little doubt but that I should have to swallow that too. Would Myrtilla prove true?—would she be faithful?—would her mother allow her to keep her vows in spite of my ruined prospects? Well, I should speedily put the question to the test.

CHAPTER III.

In the crash of my fortunes, the question that chiefly concerned me most was how Myrtilla, and above all Myrtilla's mother, would take it, and whether Lady Stoughton would not deem it a sufficient excuse for shutting her door against me. Myrtilla and I had now been carrying on a gentle flirtation for a couple of years, and though nothing very positive had been said, it was tacitly understood that something serious was to come of it. She was "the fair Myrtilla o'er whose amber locks," and the "Myrtilla, nymph of beauty rare," of my 'Occasional Poems'; and I rarely paid her a visit without laying some tributary verses in homage at her feet. These were the days of toasts, and no one might pretend to be a man of carriage who could not call the name of at least one mistress over a bottle, and draw his sword if the health was challenged; and as I had now toasted Myrtilla for two seasons running, I was regarded as a model of constancy by all my acquaintance. But with all this fidelity I could never find that there was any passion in my sentiments, and I never saw anything to warrant me in believing that Myrtilla was madly in love with myself, though she was obviously pleased with my attentions, and not a little proud of her charms having been published in print. It was through my uncle Thirlwall that I had made the acquaintance of Myrtilla and her mother, for their relations were rather with the City than with the *beau monde.* Lady Stoughton was the widow of an army jobber and contractor, who laid the foundation of his fortune by pocketing the money King James had given him for victualling the troops in Ireland and going over to King William's side. This loyal conduct led to other contracts in the Netherlands, and he had amassed a fortune before the Peace of Ryswick, and the king had rewarded his merit with knighthood. If Sir John was fortunate in his life, he was also happy in his death; for he departed this life before the Commons could inquire into his contract for the victualling of Sir George Rooke's expedition. Mistress Betty was his sole child and heiress, and she was reputed to be a better match than any two fortunes from Cheapside put together. There were offers in plenty, but Lady Stoughton was a keen woman of business, and kept fortune-hunters, younger sons, broken lords, and Irish captains at the staff's end. It was said that she grudged the portion which Sir John had directed to be paid down to his daughter on her wedding-day; and as she was certainly turning the money to good account in the meanwhile, there was a fair excuse for caution. There was no sharper negotiator in Change Alley than my Lady Stoughton; her brown beaver hat and black beard were well known at both Garraway's and Jonathan's; and her sex did not hinder her from pressing in among the stock-jobbers who haunted the Globe Tavern. Adventurers were then just beginning the game of *bubbling*, which wrought so much ruin afterwards, and my Lady Stoughton was one of the keenest players. She could buy a bull with any man on Change, and knew to an hour when to risk and when to retire. My uncle Thirlwall had the highest opinion of her business capacity, and in any dealings would rather have her on his side than against him. I have no doubt that he had done his best to engage her in his plots for a restoration, but I know not with what success—though I am well sure that she would have plotted for the restoration of Beelzebub if she saw her way to make a moidore by the measure. And although Sir John had been a zealous Whig, she made no objection to my being a Tory, or even a Jacobite, after she had fully satisfied herself about my prospects and Sir Robert's rental, as my uncle Thirlwall assured me she had been careful to do. And thus I had been graciously received by my Lady, and welcomed by Myrtilla, for a sufficient period of probation, which I suppose I might have cut short if I could have brought my mind to say the word. But things were going well enough, and I felt no call to curtail my liberty.

I would not be malicious enough to deny that Mistress Betty had charms apart from her wealth. She had a pure pink-and-white complexion, melting grey eyes, rosy lips, a dainty chin with just the least indication of a double, and a fine full throat and shapely neck. Her weak feature was her nose, which was sharp, pointed, and plebeian; but her hair was long and silky and of the colour of a pale gold. Though I say it myself, I was a handsome enough fellow in those days, for the picture which Kneller painted of me, and which hangs at the foot of the staircase at Culmford Manor House, never was a good portrait. That great painter's imagination so ran upon allegory, that if he could not paint you as a Roman emperor or senator with a Mars or a Mercury in the background over your shoulder, he allegorised your physiognomy; and he has thrown into my countenance a look of ferocity which I am sure I never showed, and an expression of sagacity which my friends have never given me credit for possessing. But be that as it may, it would be false modesty to say that many envious eyes did not follow me as I attended Myrtilla while she sailed down the abbey aisle of a Sunday after a sermon from Dr Atterbury, in blue silver brocaded waistcoat and petticoat, a furbelow of precious stones, and her hat looped up with a large diamond. Lady Stoughton, though she professed to love the dwellings of Jacob more than the tents of Kedar, or, in other words, preferred the conventicles of Dan Burgess or Timothy Crusoe to the services of the Church, was careful to send her daughter to hear the Court preachers who were most in vogue, while I gladly afforded my escort.

But I lose time in my reminiscences of the golden days when Myrtilla was the mistress of my service.

How bitterly now did I curse my folly that I had delayed making Myrtilla my wife when my prospects would have warranted me in pressing my suit with Lady Stoughton. Had I not dawdled away my time and opportunities, I might have had both her and her fortune, and been independent of any such mischance as the birth of a squab-nosed cousin. That my regrets savoured somewhat of a mean spirit, I do allow; but I loved Myrtilla just as well as half-a-dozen out of ten men love their wives when they marry, and doubtless I would have proved to her an honest and loving spouse. I think I loved her more now that I had lost her than ever I had felt before, and that I had lost her I had little doubt. The mother's love for the mammon of unrighteousness was too strongly grained in her, for her to look upon me with toleration in the shadow of my blighted prospects and uncertain future. I was not much more sure of Myrtilla herself. I had no doubt she liked me in a way: she was pleased to have me for a servant; to be rhymed about; to be squired when she took the air; to have me to call her chair and to escort her home on the occasions when she went to amusements. But I had never detected any signs of a deeper passion in her more than in myself. On the contrary, I had reason to believe Myrtilla never did nor ever could love anybody better than herself; and I very much feared that this selfishness would soon lead her to look upon me in a new light. And yet it was upon her selfishness that I placed most reliance, for a woman who is selfish will have her own way in spite of every consideration to the contrary; and if I was essential to Myrtilla's comfort, I felt certain that Myrtilla would have her own will, no matter what her mother might say or what was my condition. However, I resolved a few days after the news of my cousin's intrusion upon the scene to bring matters to an issue.

It was noon as I passed along the streets to Lady Stoughton's house, a new building near my Lord Peterborough's mansion and the Horse Ferry leading over to Lambeth. As I passed Whitehall and the Cockpit there was little unusual to be noticed, except that the guards were doubled and there were more officers flitting about hither and thither than at ordinary times. I did not meet a single face whom I could recognise as that of a Jacobite; and in truth the gentlemen of that party kept very close to their lodgings in those days, being narrowly watched by the spies of the lords-justices. If they met together it was with much precaution and secrecy, and they refrained from appearing in the haunts where, but a few days before, they had talked so confidently of success. The coffee-house in Warwick Lane was deserted, save for intruders who came there to espy the doings of the scattered remnant. I felt myself so solitary, that I began to wonder whether I did well to walk the streets.

Myrtilla was at home—her mother too—their footman informed me, and with them was Captain Westoby of Honeywood's Dragoons, a wealthy west country squire, whose frequent visits to Lady Stoughton's house I had only recently begun to take notice of. For though as far as money and acres went Captain Westoby had *in esse* all which was to be mine *in posse,* I had never seriously conceived any feelings of jealousy towards him, though Lady Stoughton obviously encouraged his visits. For neither in person nor in manners was the gallant captain such as a man of parts and fashion would willingly recognise a rival in. He was a short, squat, bull-necked man, with round shoulders and legs bandied by constant use of the saddle; and he had a flaming red face, which, looking out from beneath his great Ramilies wig, gave one the idea of a fox peering out from a dark thicket of heath. As for his manners, they were those of a bumpkin thinly glazed over by barrack-room veneer; and though his courage had been successfully tried in Flanders and the Low Countries, he did not seem a man born to conquer in the lists of love. Yet I could not help regarding it as an ominous portent that Captain Westoby should have been beforehand with me on that visit.

My usual salutations with the ladies past, and formal bows interchanged between me and Captain Westoby, the latter took up his parable at the point where I had interrupted it.

"And so you see, Mistress Betty, we were kept under arms all day, and ready to strike if ever a Jacobite dog had as much as wagged his tail. But the people were all hearty, and cried 'God save the King!' and no one dared to put in a word for the warming-pan."

"Very considerate for his most gracious Majesty's feelings," I said, with a polite sneer; "our new king has two warming-pans already—one lean and the other fat. The new Court will quite bring back the times of King Charles to you, Lady Stoughton."

"Fie!" simpered Myrtilla; "they say he has two mistresses, each uglier than the other. Sure he will never bring them here with him. And his poor queen is shut up in some castle in the north, and never allowed to look upon a man."

"King George is a man, every inch of him," put in Captain Westoby, "who will stand no wrong from man, or woman either. And the Prince of Wales is every inch a prince. I saw his horse shot under him at Oudenarde in the thick of the Hanoverian charge."

"I envy you your experience and opportunities, Captain," said I, taking snuff in my best manner. "Do you speak German, Mistress Betty?—*Sprechen sie Deutsch?* I believe it goes. Our new masters cannot speak English, I am told; so we shall all have to go to school again before we can hope to make way by flattering at Court."

"Better German than French, at any rate," retorted the Captain, settling his steinkirk. "German is a good honest Protestant tongue, and not one that Popery and Jesuitry can parly-voo into two meanings, like their d——d French and Latin. Cry you pardon, Mistress Betty."

"Lord! Captain, how fiery you are this morning! Sure you have been among the Philistines last night. And I wonder if the Court will bring new fashions with them," pondered Myrtilla; "I have heard, the German ladies don't know how to dress, and it is Paris that always sets the mode."

"Until you shone out among us, Mistress Betty," I said, with a bow. "Madame d'Iberville, from the French mission, copies you in every point. She would be perfect if she could only borrow the charms of your countenance as well as the cut of your petticoat."

"You know how I hate flattery," pouted Myrtilla, graciously; "but Madame d'Iberville has no figure really."

"She has not your figure, I admit," I replied, "but still Madame d'Iberville is one of the handsomest women in Paris. The Duke of Orleans admires her vastly."

"That was because he never saw Mistress Stoughton," said the Captain; and Myrtilla, instead of having the good taste to ignore the silly remark, blushed and bridled, while Lady Stoughton, looking up from a sermon by Mr Hoadly, smiled a complacent assent to the compliment.

"And where have you been, sir, for the last week?" inquired Myrtilla of me; "I wanted you to take me to Binfield to see my aunt Joan, who lives not far from your crooked little friend Mr Pope. But I suppose you have been too busy with your Tory and Jacobite plots to have time to serve me."

"You should really be more discreet, Mistress Betty," returned I, sarcastically; "it is dangerous to say such things before an officer of Captain Westoby's zeal for King George. He may seize me and drag me off to the Tower; and who then would escort you to Windsor Forest?—as I shall be proud to do any day that you may be disposed to travel."

"I have nothing to do with Jacobites, save when I meet them in the field, or am sent to arrest them in the way of my duty," said the Captain, loftily. "I'm an out-and-out King George's man, I am; and so is my colonel. D—n all politics! *I* was not made to be a Parliament man;" which was the truth, for the gallant Captain Westoby had but few ideas in his head beyond an overweening sense of the dignity of the army, and an unreasoning devotion to Whiggery and the Protestant Succession.

So saying, the Captain took out a pocket-comb and vehemently arranged the mazes of his wig; while Myrtilla's black boy handed us cups of chocolate, and a special cup of coffee to Lady Stoughton. Lady Stoughton's cup had once been handed to me by mistake, and I found it to possess a strange flavour of cordial syrup or Nantz brandy, a seasoning much in vogue with the good dames of Mr Burgess's communion.

"By the by," said Captain Westoby, turning to me with a malevolent grin, "I ought to have congratulated Mr Bardolph on the birth of an heir to his uncle; or should I rather condole with him? I saw Sir Robert the other night at the Rose in Covent Garden, and he had drunk so many healths that before I left he had magnified his heir into twins. Stap my vitals if he hadn't! ha, ha!"

And the Captain laughed uproariously at his recollection of Sir Robert, who had doubtless cut a comical enough figure; and though I pretended to smile, it was with the wrong side of my mouth.

"What!" cried Lady Stoughton, laying down her sermon and fixing a stern look upon me, "is there indeed an heir born to your uncle—an heir to Culmford and Prior's Grange?"

Poor Myrtilla threw a startled, and, as I thought, piteous look towards me, as if she half hoped I would be able to contradict this sinister intelligence.

"Yes," I replied, putting the best face I could upon the matter, "Sir Robert has got a son. He communicated the happy news to me yesterday. I could not be so churlish as to grudge the good man his joy, although the event does interfere in some small degree with my prospects. But I shall do well enough without the title and the manor."

Lady Stoughton only said "hem," and Myrtilla, I thought, looked unhappy. The subject was dropped, and the Captain then launched out into details of the preparations for the Queen's funeral, and the great doings that were being projected to welcome the arrival of her successor. I saw he was determined to outstay me, and I was equally bent upon holding my ground until after his departure. I plunged recklessly into the talk, and flatter myself that I said a thousand smart things at Captain Westoby's expense, which made Myrtilla laugh, and Lady Stoughton frown, although the victim of my wit himself never for a moment perceived that he was being smoked. At last the Captain, having military business to attend to, took his leave, after extracting a promise from Lady Stoughton that he would be allowed to take her and Mistress Betty to the play-house to see a fresh representation of "Cato," which was to be brought out again under the patronage of the patriots, and with a new Protestant prologue.

When he had gone, he left a dead silence behind him, which lasted for some time unbroken. Lady Stoughton hemmed and hemmed, and fingered her sermon, while Myrtilla fidgeted in her chair and toyed with her amber pouncet-box. This was evidently the calm before the tempest, and I metaphorically gathered my cloak about me and prepared to face the storm, if not with indifference at least with intrepidity.

It burst at length.

"And so you have been cut out of your chance of your uncle's estates," began Lady Stoughton, in a dry, hard, deliberate voice. "Well, I am sorry for you; but whatever has been foreordained must come to pass. Let that thought be your consolation."

"I can't see much consolation in that thought, even if I were downcast, as you seem to suppose, madam. It is an unlucky hap, and that is all that can be said about it. I trust I may never meet with a worse chance than this."

"Oh, but, Callidore," cried Myrtilla—I was Callidore in all her epistles, as she was Myrtilla in all my verses—"oh, but, Cal——Mr Bardolph, I mean, you will have no money."

"Silence, Betty!" said Lady Stoughton; "let me speak to Mr Bardolph myself. You will already have considered how this occurrence will alter your position?"

"I have yet to learn that," I stiffly replied. "I am not altogether dependent upon my uncle." This was true to some extent, for I always had had a small allowance from my father, and there was my salary as Comptroller of the Rum Vaults, which King George as yet had not deprived me of.

"Pshaw!" said Lady Stoughton; "I know your means and your prospects as well as you do yourself. Do you think I would have allowed you to come about Betty so much otherwise?"

"Oh, mother!" cried Myrtilla, pleadingly.

"Peace, girl!" interrupted the dame sternly, "and be thankful that you have a mother sharp enough to guard you against the wiles of needy fortune-hunters. As for you, sir, I need not tell you that you will lose your place, and that, from being your uncle's heir, you will become your uncle's pensioner. And I tell you this more, that Myrtilla is not for you. I never approved of your attentions; for though we may not carry our heads so high as some people, we have never mixed ourselves up with Tories or Jacobites. You will doubtless see yourself that you are now no match for my daughter's fortune."

"No match for her fortune, I confess. Whether I am a match for herself, is another question," and I looked at Myrtilla this time for an answer; but my mistress sat sadly and pensively gazing into the empty fireplace, nervously clasping and unclasping her hands; and there were—yes, by heavens, there were two great tears trembling on her eye-lashes! I never came so near loving her passionately as at that moment, when I was on the point of losing her.

"I will take my answer from Myr—from Mistress Betty herself, with your leave, Lady Stoughton;" and I turned again to Myrtilla.

"You will take it from me," said Lady Stoughton, stamping her foot; "and it is this — come no more here. You will find my door shut if you ever presume to call. Out of respect for your uncle Mr Thirlwall, I have tolerated your courtship of my daughter; but as no promise has passed between you, there is no harm done. I say once for all, that our acquaintance must end. And more, a worthy gentleman of good estate and sound principles has this day asked me to be received as a suitor for my daughter's hand."

"Captain Westoby, I presume," I said, bitterly; "your experience of Change Alley will show you how to work for a bull. Captain Westoby and gentlemen of his kidney will rise in the market—for a time at all events."

"I have said my last, sir," said Lady Stoughton, opening her sermon. "It only remains for you to go."

"One word from your daughter, and I relieve you of my presence. Do you wish all to be over between us? Say yes, and I shall never trouble you again. Say no, and you shall be mine in spite of ten thousand mothers;" and I withered Lady Stoughton, who was already deep in her sermon, with a scowl which Betterton could not have surpassed.

Myrtilla said neither yes nor no, but sat with her face buried in her handkerchief; and from some wriggling of her body and occasional spasmodic kicks at her footstool, gave me to understand that she was labouring under some strong emotion to which she was unable to give utterance. I stood by her for a minute with my hat in my hand,

and then stepping back, made a very low bow to both. "Lady Stoughton, I am your humble servant. Mistress Betty, your most obedient humble servant;" and bowed myself out at the door.

My dismissal was nothing more than I had expected, considering the mercenary character of the mother and the selfish feelings of Myrtilla. Nor could I altogether blame them. Had there not been as much lucre as love all along in my pursuit of Myrtilla? And could I not have married her six months ago with Lady Stoughton's blessing, but for my cursed indifference? I tried to persuade myself that I was rightly served. I congratulated myself that I was at all events heart-whole. But a dishclout is a dishclout, no matter who pins it on; and my repulse in this quarter added seriously to the sum-total of my misfortunes. I would have to bear the gibes of my acquaintance, the triumph of Captain Westoby, who would step into my seat before it was cold. I mentally resolved to pick a quarrel with the Captain, ruffler as he was reputed to be, the first time I encountered him. I would tweak his nose in the presence of Myrtilla. I would pink him behind Montague House. Nerved by these feelings of revenge, I went to cheer myself up at Drury Lane play-house in the evening; and there, sure enough, were Captain Westoby and Mistress Betty — Myrtilla no more — cooing like two turtle-doves, and Lady Stoughton behind them, looking blessed in the society of her children. I laughed so consumedly that my sides ached, and from that day to this never thought more of Mistress Betty.

CHAPTER IV.

I WILL not dwell on the next six months of my life, which were the darkest days I ever passed through. The new King arrived, and there were grand doings all over London. The Thames was crowded at Greenwich with boats to catch a sight of the landing of King George, and his Majesty made a splendid entry into London amid the applauses of the mob, which had been as furiously Jacobite a few weeks before as it was now boisterously Hanoverian. The King was not long in signifying his political predilections. The Marlborough, Walpole, Stanhope, Townshend, and Cowper faction had it all their own way at the new Court; and the Queen's Ministers soon discovered that if they were granted life and liberty, they were to look upon this immunity as an act of grace. The palace door was shut in Ormond's face; no more notice was taken of Oxford than of the most insignificant dangler at the levee; and Bolingbroke, who, more double and bolder than the others, had made direct proffers of service to the monarch, was coldly repulsed. But more active measures soon followed: the hue-and-cry was sent after Wyndham and other prominent partisans of the Chevalier; Bolingbroke fled to France; a general panic took possession of the Jacobites in London, especially the agents and intriguers of the party, for Harvey and others who had been arrested had very frankly testified to their penitence by incriminating all others who had been in any way connected with their plots.

It speedily pleased his gracious Majesty to relieve me of the post in which I served him, and the Comptrollership of the Rum Vaults in the Victualling Office at Tower Hill was given to Mr Palmeil, the member for Greaseby, a tool and supporter of Walpole; and he would doubtless have turned the office to better profit than I had been able to do, had he not speculated with the Government money in his hands in the South Sea Bubble some time afterwards, and been expelled the House and thrown into the Fleet. But I shall not be so vain as to say that the severance of my connection with the navy was marked by any apparent ill effects to the maritime fortunes of the country. Nor did I sit again in Parliament. When the election came round, Sir Robert had publicly said that if I would lay aside my d——d pride and ask his pardon for my insulting behaviour, he would return me again for all that had passed and gone. But this I could not lower myself to do, the more especially as I felt I had been not a little at fault and had used my uncle ungratefully in my hotness. Failing my coming forward, Sir Robert loftily declined to have anything to do with a Hanoverian election, and so a Whig placeman stepped in and took the borough at his own price, much to the disgust of the electors, who, in the absence of a contest, were obliged to accept his good pleasure, which was but niggardly.

Thus quit of politics and public employment, I found my time hang heavily on my hands, when the troubles of my mind most required relief in exertion. I wrote verses, I wrote pamphlets after the manner of Swift, attacking Court and Ministers; I tried a play, which Colley Cibber damned, doubtless because he knew I was a Jacobite; and I even meditated writing a Universal History, until assured that such a work was only fitted for the pens of Grub Street. I went as much to the coffee-houses as I could afford to do; and indeed the society of the wits was the only solace I then met with. And I sedulously associated myself in all the plans that were afoot for a counter-revolution; and these were legion. But though grand projects were broached, discussed, and resolved to be carried into execution, nothing was done as the months passed away—though we waited in despairing expectancy, like Jews for their Messiah, for the news of the arrival of a French fleet on the coast with King James on board, and a French army at his back.

I often visited my uncle Thirlwall, who was as much at the bottom of things as most people, and vainly endeavoured to get him to share his confidence with me; but the old man had lost none of his north-country caution, and when meddling in matters political, took care not to let his left hand know what his right hand did.

"Rest you easy," was his advice to me. "The time is not so far off when King James will find employment and to spare for all his friends—ay, possibly for some of them who will not be in such a hurry to take the chance when they get the offer of it. The country is fast ripening for revolution. It would be foolish to put in the sickle before the corn is full yellow."

"But it seems to me a mistake to allow the

Elector of Hanover time to strengthen himself, as is being done. All these addresses that are coming up from corporations, the enthusiasm of the army, the cheers of the Londoners whenever he goes abroad—all these seem to me to show that the people are taking very kindly to the change."

"You speak like a child," cried my uncle, angrily. "Look around you. Where are the Tory nobles, where are all the Peers who voted on the right side in the Act of Succession? All retired to their estates in disgust with the Court, and numbering the followers they can bring into the field. What is Derwentwater doing in the north? Why, drilling his miners and mustering the north-country squires. The west only waits the word from the Duke of Beaufort to rise one and all. And Scotland, lad, Scotland before six months are over will be in a blaze. King George hath affronted some half-dozen of the greatest chiefs among the Highlandmen; and what is better, hath stopped the gratuities that they enjoyed from the Queen. They are eating out their hearts to have a dash at the Whigs in King James's name. Wouldst care to take a trip to Scotland ? "

I had no particular inclination for such an expedition. The Scots I had seen in the Commons after the Union, and the needy lords who used to haunt the Queen's Court and Ministers' levees, were not much to my taste. The only good Scotchman I had ever known was Dr Arbuthnot, and he had been purified at Oxford from the taints of his native upbringing. And from all that I had read about the country, it did not seem a desirable place wherein to sojourn, the valleys being, as I remembered from one writer, covered with bere or bigg, and the hills with snow ; the air " so infected by the steams of the nasty inhabitants " that they had to temper it by high - smelling viands ; the women with " scarce any cloaths at all save part of their bed-cloaths pinn'd about their shoulders ; " the music of the country " loud terrene noises like the bellowing of beasts." All this, and worse, I had recently read in an English gentleman's Modern Account of Scotland; and the country did not seem an Arcadia wherein one might reasonably go a-pleasuring. But I would have done anything to engage in action, anything to get away from London and my misfortunes; and if my uncle had proposed to send me on a mission to the Sophy of Persia or the Cham of Tartary, I believe I would have jumped at the proposal.

"I do not know what use I could be among those breechless savages," I replied, "whose language I hardly understand; but if you think that any good can come of it to the cause, of course I am willing to go to the remotest dens of Scotland. But don't you think you are putting too much upon the Scotch? They have sold one king already——"

"And would sell another if they got the price," interrupted my uncle; "but keep your mind easy, they will get a better market by fighting for him this time. And I am not speaking of the Lowlanders, who are mostly Whigs and Presbyterians, but of the Highlandmen of the north, who are many of them Catholics and all devoted to the house of Stuart."

"Well, I am willing to go anywhere in his Majesty's service," I answered, resignedly; "action of any kind is better than eating out the heart in idleness."

"True; but I would have you keep yourself more aloof from those who are so busy vapouring and drinking healths in the taverns. They do no good, my boy, except to distract the attention of the Government from the men who are really playing the game. It might disturb my plans if the hue-and-cry was sent after you. Let me know whenever you are in want of money. And hark ye, a word of comfort. My sister writeth me that this new-come bantling at the Manor is but a puny child, and that the doctors have got it in hand. Mayest have the old acres yet, lad, for all that has come and gone."

I did not see much comfort in the prospect. My hopes had got such a dash that it was beyond my power to set them upright again. The idea of my loss, too, was full of disgust to me. The assumption of my succession to the title and property had, I was now fully aware, been the bane of my life, the cause of my opportunities and career being wasted, and I was not going to rest upon any delusions of the kind in future. It had humiliated me before the world, and it had lowered me also in my own self-respect. I was conscious that I had shown a mean, mercenary spirit, and that I had been ungrateful to my uncle for what he had done to me, if my pride would only allow me to confess as much to him. I wished that my cousin might live to be an octogenarian, provided that I should never again hear of him or of his inheritance; and above all, I wished for action, for a revolution, for war, for anything that would upturn the present order of things and afford me an escape from myself and my troubles. But Scotland was the last corner of the earth that I would have selected for a refuge.

But how little can we control our own will, far less our own destinies! Even while these thoughts were brooding in my mind, an event was impending which was to change the whole current of my desires, to put a new object into my life, and to welcome a proposal, which I had at first heard with repulsion, as a blessed opportunity. I had been supping with my uncle Thirlwall when the conversation I have recorded above took place, at his house in Theobald's, opposite Gray's Inn Gardens, and was just crossing Holborn when I heard the noise of a scuffle at the dark corner of the lane leading into Lincoln's Inn Fields. Two chairmen passed me, running for bare life, as I stood for a minute to listen. I had no desire to make one in a drunken brawl, most likely between the watch and some uproarious bloods on their way home from the tavern to Gray's Inn, with the chance of being conveyed to the Compter if the law had the best of it; but a woman's shriek, followed by several piercing screams, made me change my mind, and drawing my sword, I rushed to the scene of the fray.

A woman was surrounded by half-a-dozen ruffians, who were endeavouring to prevent her struggles and outcries. The fragments of a broken sedan-chair lay in the gutter, and by it the body of a stout serving-man in livery, who had been either killed or stunned by the assailants. I saw at a glance that the villains were no common footpads or bullies of the streets. They were of the Mohocks, who had been let loose upon the town by the Whigs in the Queen's time to be a terror to the Tory statesmen, and who now, when there was no political purpose to serve, broke out every now and then to indulge their private excesses. Some of them had received pretty rough handling, I could see, from the serving-man before they had felled him to the ground; and all of them were much excited with liquor.

"Stop her squalling! Tip her the lion! By G—d, we'll stand her on the crown of her head! No, no; hold off! We'll have her along with us. Let us carry her to Oxford Kate's. Stuff her mantle into her mouth, won't you? She'll bring the watch upon us in no time!"

I rushed at them, and ran one bully through, who fell to the ground with a bitter curse. The others drew, and dropping their prey, who fell senseless to the ground, we were soon closed in a deadly struggle. I got my back against the wall, and thanks to my opponents being more or less drunk, successfully held my ground against their five points. One I caught off his guard, and speedily dropped by a fierce lounge through the throat; but the contest was unequal, and only for the speedy assistance that came from the prostrate servant, I should have been easily overpowered and borne down. The man, however, recovering consciousness, and seeing how matters stood, seized the pole of the broken chair, and began to lay on with such good-will that the tide was quickly turned in my favour. One man was laid prostrate by a well-planted blow upon his head, I disabled the sword-arm of another and broke his weapon, a fourth closed with the servant and endeavoured to wrest the pole from him, while I was left to fight it out with the man who seemed to be the leader of the gang, and who still pressed furiously upon me, and endeavoured to beat down my guard. But I was the better swordsman of the two, and being less flustered and hot, I not only held my ground, but began pace by pace to make him give way. At last I got him into the gutter, and just as I had parried one of his wild thrusts, he leapt back out of reach and called parley.

"What the devil needs this be carried farther for?" he cried, passionately. "You have the best of it. You have got the girl, which I suppose is all you want. Go your way, in God's name, and let us go ours."

His mask had fallen off along with his wig and hat in the struggle, and I recognised him as Tom Burnett, the dissolute son of the late Bishop, who was then a student of the Inns of Court, and a potentate among the Mohocks, if not their emperor. It was he who afterwards, when he became a judge, decided against me in the Common Pleas in the case of Bardolph *v.* Scroggins, one of my own tenants; and I could not help wondering whether our midnight *rencontre* had anything to do with a decision that was manifestly so unjust and inequitable, though the Chancellor was silly enough to adhere to it on appeal.

"You may go, sir," said I sternly, lowering my point. "I know you, and where to find you. And you will have to answer for this night's work if the lady hath got any ill by your rascality."

As Burnett sullenly sheathed his sword, I bade the servant loose his antagonist, to whom he was administering a severe drubbing; and the man, flinging off the Mohock with a hearty kick in the shins, immediately ran to where his mistress was still lying insensible, and endeavoured to raise her up.

I came to his assistance, and looked into the pale face which was hanging on his arm. It was a young lady of not more than nineteen or twenty, and beautiful too if one could judge in the darkness. Her long fair hair had fallen down in the struggle, and trailed upon the ground, and her mantle had been torn in pieces. I aided the man as best I could do by chafing her hands and fanning her face to bring her round; but we failed to arouse her from the heavy swoon into which she had fallen. Seeing the Mohocks busy with a flask endeavouring to restore their disabled comrades, I called out to them to bring some drink, or the lady would die.

The scoundrels having had their beating, and being now in a measure sober, were amenable, and Burnett brought the flask readily enough. "It's right good Nantz, and will bring her round in a jiffy," he said, coolly. "We meant the girl no ill, and I thought but to have a kiss of a countrywoman of my own, as I knew her to be by her screeching. Gad, but she fought and tore like a vixen!"

"You had better get out of the way before she recovers, or the shock will throw her off again," I said, without any notice of his clumsy apology. "I shall put the watch on your heels the minute they come up, so you know best what is good for yourselves."

"The watch be d——d," retorted Burnett. "That bumpkin with his pole is worse than a score of Charleys. If it had not been for him we would have spitted you like a lark, and carried off your damosel to a merry supper at the Cock. They say biting and scratching is courtship where she comes from; and, egad! you'll find her a proficient in the pastime." And with that the Mohocks went off, half carrying half dragging their wounded and disabled comrades with them.

"Who is your mistress?" I asked in a whisper, as I endeavoured to force a little brandy through her bloodless lips and set teeth.

"A young Scotch lady of the Countess Aboyne's train, sir," he replied, in a low voice. "I was charged to see her home by my Lady Mar, and had got thus far when the villains fell upon us, and the rogues of chairmen ran away. How I am to answer to my lady I know not."

"I know Lady Mar, and will witness to your brave conduct. Have no fear," I returned; and at this moment our charge began to show signs of returning life. With a tremulous shiver and a gasp, she opened her eyes, which, as her head was now resting on my arm, fell upon my face bent above.

Seeing that I was a stranger, she seemed once more on the point of swooning again, but I hastened to reassure her. "Have no fear, madam. You are safe, and with friends who will protect you. The ruffians who affrighted you are fled."

She heaved a sigh of relief, and again shut her eyes.

"Drink a little of this," I urged, putting the flask again to her lips. "You will be better presently, and we shall take you home in safety. You will soon forget the alarms these scoundrels have caused you."

With the aid of the servant we assisted her to her feet, and I made her lean upon my arm. She was a tall finely made damsel, and with her long hair streaming down below her waist, and her rent mantle hanging about her, might have well served for the distressed heroine of one of the new romances.

"My Lady Aboyne has lodgings in St Martin's Lane, sir," said the serving-man, "and if you will permit me, I shall show you the way;" and shouldering his chair-pole, he preceded us as an advanced-guard, while I brought on my fair companion, whose agitation still compelled her, though with shy reluctance, to lean upon my arm.

We walked on in silence for some time, that she might collect herself and regain her confidence; and as I began to have some curiosity about my companion, and I wished to hear her talk, I expressed a hope that she had not been hurt by the violence of these unmanly dastards.

"No, I do not feel hurt," she said; "but what kind of a town is this, where such things can be done in the very streets? A maiden would be safer among the wildest cateran of Lochaber or Badenoch than among these wicked men."

"You are from Scotland then, madam?"

"Yes. My father—oh, how my father would thank you for saving me!—more than I can, for I am but a simple country lass, and do not know what to say. And you were so brave too! They were six to one; and even my father never cares to engage more than four, though he is thought a great swordsman among his own people."

She looked up in my face with an expression of such unaffectedly grateful enthusiasm that I could not help being touched. She was not speaking the language of mere compliment or flattery.

"Your father, then, is a soldier?"

"No; but in our country, where frays are frequent, and where the cateran are always breaking out, and private quarrels between clans are rife, everybody must know the use of arms; and my father, when little more than a boy, served in Dundee's army. My father is the laird of Balmoral, of the Clan Findlay, or Farquharsons as they call us. I wish he were here to tell you how grateful I am to you for preserving me."

"I shall think you want to flatter me if you say any more; but how came you to have been all alone with only a servant so late in the streets? Have you no gentlemen friends to guard you when you are abroad late of nights?"

"I was at Lady Mar's," she said, simply, "and there were so many lords and ladies, whose names I cannot remember, and the

Countess was so taken up with them, that she forgot about me until they were all going away. And then her sister, the Lady Mary, was very kind, and had a chair called, and sent a man to see me home."

I could not help drawing in my own mind a contrast between Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and this simple fresh child of the Scottish mountains. I knew Lady Mary well, and had often formed a trio with her and Mr Pope—they quarrelled bitterly afterwards, and the poet's vengeance on Sappho is known to every one.

"I came here three months ago with the Countess of Aboyne," she continued, in her artless frankness. "She is very good to me, and said it would be well to let me see the world; and my mother said that it was too great an honour to be passed by. But, heavens!" she suddenly cried, holding up her hand, and drawing her arm from me, "what is this? Blood! You are wounded, then, and never told me!"

I had got a thrust in the arm, but had not marked it at the time, and scarcely felt it now, though the blood had been dripping from my sleeve, and had trickled on to my companion's hand, and thus startled her.

"It is nothing," I said, pulling out my handkerchief, and daintily taking her hand in mine, —it was large, and soft, and white,—I was going to wipe it free from the blood-spots. "But it is something," she cried impetuously, as she tore her hand from mine; "you are hurt, you will lose blood, you may bleed to death! Let me"—and before I could prevent her, she had turned up my coat-sleeve, found out the cut, which, to tell the truth, was little more than a mere puncture; had torn off a silken scarf from her own neck, and bound my arm as deftly and much more tenderly than a barber-surgeon would have done.

"I am not afraid of blood," she said, while her fingers were nimbly putting the last knots upon the scarf; "wounds are common enough where I come from, and women are the doctors that are readiest to hand. But you must go home quickly and not get cold. The night air is bad for an open cut."

I was quite sorry when this little piece of surgery was ended, for the touch of her soft fingers upon my arm sent a strange thrill through me, and if I had dared I would have bent down and kissed this young maiden of the wilds, who could be so bold and yet so tender, so artless and yet so sage. But we were at our destination, and the man was already knocking loudly at the door of Lady Aboyne's lodgings.

"You will allow me to call and inquire for your welfare, Mistress Farquharson—I suppose that is how I should address you?" I inquired, with some anxiety. "My name is Bardolph, Edward Bardolph of the Temple, and I am known both to Lady Mar and to Lady Mary her sister. I shall be consumed with anxiety until I know that you are not the worse for this night's adventure."

"Yes," she promptly said, "I should like you to come, so that Lady Aboyne may thank you for your bravery on my behalf. She will know much better what to say than I can. Yes, come."

And when I would have taken my leave with a low bow, she frankly stretched forth her soft white hand to be shaken. I kissed it, and though I did not mean it, I believe I did presume to squeeze it ever so softly. I have been told since that I did press it and wring it hard.

The light streaming from the open door gave me a last glimpse of a finely cut face, a massive but well-proportioned countenance, a broad white brow, crowned with a mass of fair brown hair, which also fell in a rippling cloud over her shoulders. Two melting blue eyes, half wistful, half wondering, completed my subjection, and I turned away, my mind filled with the sweetness and the charms of the fair barbarian. If she was a type of her countrywomen, would I any longer repine over my mission to Scotland? Why, to see her again I would go to—well, to a place which the eloquent Mr Burgess hath very frequently described in literally glowing colours.

CHAPTER V.

I DID not fail to call next day at the Countess of Aboyne's to inquire after my fair companion of the previous night, and was received by her ladyship as a second Palmerin of England or Amadis of Gaul, so glowing had been the accounts given by Mistress Farquharson of my prowess. My assurances that the Mohocks were but cowards and bullies, and only dangerous to defenceless women, were only accepted as evidence of my own modesty; and much was made of my wound, which was but a cat's scratch after all, that had never given me any trouble. Lady Aboyne, I found, was a daughter of Mr Lockhart of Carnwath, with whom I had been acquainted as a Scotch member of the Queen's last Parliament, and an active worker under the rose for King James. Her ladyship was also an enthusiastic Jacobite, and when we had satisfied ourselves about our mutual principles my reception became very frank and cordial.

Other visitors arriving, I was able to devote my attentions to Mistress Farquharson, by whose beauty I was every moment becoming more impressed. I have seen lovelier women among the beauties of Queen Anne's Court, women whose beauty would at once awe and dominate the heart, but the charm of this mountain maid lay in her sweetness and artlessness ; her face was the true mirror of her mind. Whether speaking or moving, she had the serenity of Nature in one of her reposeful moods, which I found put a soothing witchery upon me whenever I was beside her, and she had a pleasantness of disposition and a good-humour that never fail to cast a reflected beauty upon any woman's face. But I believe what charmed me most was the contrast which she presented to the Chloes, the Amintas, the Phyllises—ay, to the Myrtillas—of my acquaintance,—the ladies bred in the mode of the town, with their talk framed to a fashionable pattern, their minds trimmed to the atmosphere of a kettle-drum or a card-table, and their faces as often as not fashioned to suit the pattern of the hour. But *she* was all simplicity; she seemed to be redolent of nature; scents of the May and soft zephyrs seemed to be ever around her, even in a close room. She might have been a shepherdess in Arcadia in the days of purity and pastoral guilelessness. There was nothing of the hoyden or the gawky or the rustic, which the playwrights always attribute to the country damsel when they put her upon the stage; whatever might have been her breeding, she was a lady by the gift of Nature, whose patent carries with it all the qualities that make up the perfect woman.

As the best way of making myself agreeable, I talked to her of her home and of the difference which she must have felt in being thrown into the heart of a great city, and endeavoured to draw out her mind upon the sights she had seen and the people she had met. Nor was I less pleased with the good sense which she evinced, when she told me of the admiration and wonder with which the greatness of London and its wealth and commerce had filled her; but that the life of the city seemed to be forced and unnatural, that every one was trying to displace and jostle his neighbour, and trade and business seemed all to depend upon one man being able to get the better of another. I pointed out that the making of profit was at the bottom of all business, and that if no profit was made there could be no business done. To which my fair philosopher replied that some one must be the loser, and that it was not right for one man to get the better of another in dealing. I saw no means of accommodating our commercial system to such a strict standard of ethics, and changed the ground by asking whether no one ever cheated in her country.

No doubt they did, she returned, too many did, but that did not make it any better. The people where she came from mostly lived on their own land, ate the food which it produced, and obtained their clothing from their own herds; and she thought that was a better way of living than trying to take the advantage of other people in bargaining. But the Highlanders, I retorted, were alleged to be rather partial to helping themselves to their neighbours' property, driving away their cattle and suchlike, which practices were no more in accordance with the golden rule than even sharp dealing in Change Alley. Mistress Farquharson admitted with a flush that no doubt there was much done in the Highlands that ought not to be done, but that when chiefs or gentlemen plundered their enemies' lands, they did it not for the sake of the gain, but as a punishment for some wrong done which the law could not redress. There were caterans or robbers who carried off cattle to maintain themselves in idleness, just as the highwaymen robbed in England; and after all, she thought, if there was to be wrong done, it was better to do it openly and high-handed with the sword, than that men should rob and ruin one another under the colour of a fair and honest transaction, as she had heard was often done in the City.

In one of our talks, and they were frequent, for I found some excuse for a daily visit, I drew from her her views of society and of the fashionable ladies whom she had met. Her opinions of these took an even more severely practical turn. She thought the friendships of the fine people she had met were hollow and insincere. Ladies kissed each other when they met, and talked scandal each against the other as soon as they were separate. Men effusively welcomed one another and paid all sorts of mutual compliments; and so soon as one was gone, the other began to make him the amusement of the company, to sneer at him and to show up his faults. It was different in her country. When people were friends, they could not do too much to show their friendship; when they were enemies they were enemies, and boldly met each other sword in hand. Surely such honesty was better than living in a world that was all pretence. And as for the ladies —well, in her country they did not think much of women who gadded about from one house to another, and did not stay at home and mind their household duties. "But why do I say this?" she said, with a laughing blush; "I am as bad as those I am blaming, since I am here away from my mother, and spending my time in idle visiting and sight-seeing. But that will soon be over. We go back to Scotland next week."

I declared myself distressed at the idea of so early a departure, and hoped that I might be permitted to make as much of the short time that remained as I could in pursuing an acquaintance that I felt to be so agreeable and interesting. I was very anxious to learn everything about Scotland. It was very likely that I should soon have to pay a visit to that country.

"Oh, then!" she cried, with unmistakable pleasure in her looks, "you must come to Deeside, to Balmoral, that my father may thank you for saving me. It is but a poor Highland castle, but you will be made right heartily welcome. You must promise me that you will come and see my father."

In the case of a town-bred lady I would have put my own interpretation upon such an off-hand invitation; but Mistress Farquharson was too innocent and truthful to have any idea beyond a wish to show her gratitude for the little service that accident had enabled me to do her. Mentally resolving that I would do my best to see her, I replied that I really did not know whereabouts in Scotland I would have to go. I believed I was going on some kind of a mission; but as to what it was and where it would lead me, I was all in the dark as yet.

"Ah!" cried she, with a meaning look,

"we shall see you at Balmoral. I am a prophetess, and foretell that your mission will lead you to Deeside. Don't you know that the Earl of Mar is to have a grand hunting, and a great number of noblemen and gentlemen will be there—some from England even? You will be sure to be invited, and then you will come to Balmoral, which is not far from Invercauld, where the Earl will stay. I am sure you will be there."

"I should only be too happy to fulfil your prediction; but though I have some acquaintance with the Earl, I do not know that I have any claims upon his hospitality, or that there is much chance of his asking me."

"Then your mission has nothing to do with —with King James?" she said, hesitating, and with a disappointed air.

"Ah, now I really see that you have the gift of divination," returned I, laughing; "and this great hunting is, I suppose—is—well, it is not likely to be a conventicle of Whigs?"

"No," she smiled; "but since you do not

know more, I must not tell you. It is not safe to take me into secrets, for I always stupidly betray them before I am aware."

"I wonder if you would keep one which I should very much like to tell you," I said, bending over her with a meaning look full of passion in my eyes.

Not until this time had the least suspicion crossed her mind of my growing affection for her, and there was a look of startled surprise came over her face, and she shrank back in her chair as if she had received a fright. "No, no," she hurriedly cried, "I have warned you of my weakness. I should blunder it out some day when it was most awkward. Pray tell me nothing that you would not mind the whole world hearing."

I said I would think over the matter; and then, after finding out what her movements were for the next few days and where I was most likely to encounter her, I took my departure, leaving Mistress Farquharson evidently a good deal perturbed.

"Is this mysterious mission of mine, that seems so slow in arriving, likely to lead me anywhere near Balmoral?" I asked of my uncle Thirlwall the next time I called on him.

"Balmoral!" said he; "not that I am aware of. What or where is Balmoral?"

"Why, I thought you could have told me that? Whether it is a town or an estate, a mountain or a river, I have no idea; but there is *a* Farquharson of Balmoral, and from all I can hear I fancy he must be somebody among the Scotch Jacobites."

"Stay, stay," cried my uncle, "I have you now. Farquharson, Balmoral,—let me see a minute;" and going to a corner of his room he pressed a panel, which turned aside and disclosed a secret recess, from which he drew a bundle of papers.

"Farquharson. Yes, to be sure. James Farquharson of Balmoral, one of the chiefs of the Farquharsons, or Clan Findlay as they are called. Not the chief of the clan, who is

Invercauld, but the man of most influence among those of his own name. Is staunch for the King, has some military experience, and served when a youth in Dundee's last campaign. Will hold the rank of——but that's enough in the meantime, and all the information I have about him."

"He is, then, a gentleman of authority and position among the Highlandmen?"

"Certainly, in his own clan and country; but what have you to do with him? How do you come to have heard of him? I trust he has not fallen into the hands of the Government. Lord Mar places great trust in him, and had charged him——but I must not speak beyond my warrant at present. What know ye of him?"

"Nothing much; but I had casually heard his name mentioned, and I was wondering whether I might not fall in with him on my trip to Scotland."

"Nothing more likely, but you need not trouble yourself about him. We have him secure already. If, indeed, you know of any Scottish waverers who might be brought to listen to reason and loyalty, you would be doing a service by essaying them. But as for Farquharson of Balmoral, you need not trouble yourself about him."

"And can you not give me any idea of when I am to set out? The Countess of Aboyne goes to Scotland next week, and I would gladly ride with her coach."

"Yes, and be arrested on a Secretary's warrant before you got to Nottingham, and all the papers with which you will be charged brought back for the information of the Council. No, no; we must go to work another way. Come back next week, and I shall perhaps be able to tell you more."

I had rather hoped that fate would have favoured me so far that I might have been allowed to accompany Mistress Farquharson and her patroness to Scotland; but it was quite useless endeavouring to argue with my hard-headed and close-minded uncle, who owed his success in evading the cunningest endeavours of the Government to detect his plottings to his immovable reticence and caution; nor would it have improved my chances of making him compliant if I had ventured to confess that my growing interest in a Scottish young lady was my chief reason for wishing to expedite my journey. My uncle came from too near the Border to have much love for the Scots; and though politics and also trade had brought him much into contact with people of that nation, the intercourse had never softened his original prejudices. So, to cover my forced acquiescence, I muttered something about being sick of town and this life of inaction, and that I would gladly go anywhere and do anything for a change.

"You seem to have got hot upon Scotland all of a sudden," said my uncle, testily. "Have you heard anything——but no, that is impossible. Careless as they are, they would not take you into their confidence, just yet at all events. Well, since you are sick of town, I'll tell you what to do. Go down to Culmford and see your father and mother for a few weeks. I think your duty might have taken you there before, seeing you had nothing better to do. And look ye, if ye can patch up a peace with Sir Robert, do so. He may be of use to you yet; and if anything should befall this brat—why, all the more reason you should be friends."

The counsel was good, and put a resolution upon thoughts that for some time back had been vaguely shaping themselves in my head. Yes, I would go to Culmford and take leave of my parents before going on this Scotch expedition, and if I could find a way of reconciling myself to my uncle I would certainly take it. After all, what blame attached to the good man, who had only followed the instincts of his nature, while I had showed myself both mercenary and ungrateful?

Promising I should take his advice, I was about to depart, when the subject all upper-most in my mind at present prompted another question.

"This Farquharson of Balmoral of whom we were speaking—how does he rank? I suppose you would consider him a gentleman?"

"A gentleman!" cried my uncle testily; "to be sure he is a gentleman. Isn't he a Scotchman? and did you ever see one of the nation who had not a pedigree as long as his purse was short? But what has put Balmoral so much into your head? You wool-gathering poets are always raving about some name or other. There is the Elector, who by all accounts has not much poetry about him, cannot sleep at nights, they say, because he is haunted by the name of 'der gross Glenboget,'—though I question if Gordon of Glenbucket, honest gentleman, can put more than fifty men in the field when the pinch comes. And now away with you," he added impatiently, as a man in cloak and slouched hat, whom it needed little skill to set down as a foreign priest, opened the door of his room and hastily drew back again. "Take my advice, and go to Culmford, and you won't be long there before you hear from me."

But before I went to Culmford my mind was made up that I would speak to Bess Farquharson—I had learned her Christian name, and found it very sweet for constant inaudible repetition. That I was in love—utterly, earnestly, desperately in love—was quite patent to myself. There is always a degree of madness in love; and sure there could be no one madder than myself, with prospects full of uncertainty and hopelessness, contemplating asking the love of a lady, with marriage as a natural and immediate consequence. Beyond my heart I had nothing to offer her; and as for her, I presumed that she must necessarily be poor, as all the Scotch are. Yes, all my relatives would undoubtedly have set my infatuation down to insanity. But be that as it might, I would rather be accounted mad in my choice of Bess than be the discreet husband of Mistress Betty Stoughton.

CHAPTER VI.

As the summer months of seventeen hundred and fifteen passed, political ferment waxed apace with them. The Government, which had hitherto affected a secure confidence, and had allowed the Jacobites fairly free licence as long as they refrained from public speeches and overt acts against King George, now began to take proceedings against the chief men of the party. Wyndham was captured after an attempt at flight, and committed to the Tower; Harvey of Combe and Lord Lansdowne and his brother Colonel Granville were soon speedily sent there likewise. The hue-and-cry was raised against the captains and recruiters, who had to make themselves scarce to Scotland, Ireland, and the northern counties, where they were soon heard of as swearing in men for King James, and forming companies for his service. All the Roman Catholics and the country gentlemen who stood ill with the Government retired from town to avoid the obnoxious surveillance to which they were exposed, and the constant danger they ran of being arrested and imprisoned upon the information of some rascal informer. And amid all the party hubbub that was going on, the Whigs began to think that their time had come to take vengeance upon the Queen's Ministers, and a cry for their impeachment was ordered to be set afloat upon the popular air.

I frequently saw Bishop Atterbury during these months, but could gather little from him of what projects were in hand. He told me that he was in correspondence with both Ormond and Bolingbroke, and he had as much information as they could give him, but that did not amount to much. Like my uncle, and like all the other practical Jacobites of the time, the Bishop believed that the Restoration must depend upon the English and Scotch themselves, and that no king placed upon the throne by foreign arms would be able long to maintain himself. Nevertheless they did their best to enlist both France and Spain in the cause, and talked boldly of the descent of a French army under Berwick, at any place along the southern coast. But the politic Lewis, whose reign was fast drawing to a close, thought more of advancing his own aims on the Continent by making use of King James's claims, and of keeping him as a thorn in the side of Hanover, than of seating him once more in St James's. But Atterbury spoke with a confidence in the feeling of the country which I confess I could not share. The north would rise under Derwentwater to a man. The Highland clans would shortly break out from absolute necessity, and with the aid of the Lowland nobles secure that kingdom. And though the Elector was able to make a stand, King James would hold his own north of the Trent, and finally make the position of George and his Government utterly untenable.

Such was the talk of the day, and the moods of the London mobs fairly reflected the hopes and fears of the opposed factions. When the eclipse in April befell, the Tories were jubilant at this signal mark of heaven's indignation, which, as the chroniclers relate, had in olden time foreshadowed the ruin of King Stephen's usurpation. Queen Anne's coronation day was duly remembered by a bonfire at the Conduit, and the Dutchman's effigy was given to the flames amid uproarious cheers for "High Church and Ormond!" and the festivity ended by a general breakage of Whig windows, and a rolling in the kennel of all who refused the health of Bolingbroke. Jacobite ballads in honour of "Young Jimmy the Rover" were howled at every street corner, and the constables soundly cudgelled if they dared to interfere with the treasonable ditty. On the King's birthday a couple of companies burned their "Hanover shirts," which were but sorry rags certainly; and even among the Life Guards, troopers took King James's bounty and drank his health with little secrecy. If the Chevalier had boldly presented himself in London, he would have found himself the idol of an adoring populace — for full nine days at the very least.

There were times when I began to think that I had better consult my own safety by leaving town as speedily as possible. As a former member of Parliament, and as a placeholder under the Queen's Ministers, I could hardly fail to be ranked as a Jacobite, especially as I had never taken the oaths to the new King, and haunted the society of men who were known to be working for a restoration. I believe the change in my circumstances, which was well known to some of the men in power, was the reason why no warrant was issued against me; for plain Mr Edward Bardolph, very much out at elbows, and able to do as little for King James as for himself, was a different person from the heir of Culmford and Prior's Grange, who would have counted for something in a Jacobite muster at Nottingham. But I could not depend on my obscurity carrying me too far, for when a descent was made on Ozinda's coffee-house, which I and other Jacobite gentlemen steadily frequented, and Ozinda himself was carried before the Secretary of State, I received a friendly hint from Mr Addison, who was now deep in the confidence of the new Ministers, that my name was in the black-book, and that I would do well to keep myself as private as possible. For this reason I was very glad to act on my uncle Thirlwall's suggestion, and ride into Nottinghamshire until some change came in the times. But first of all I had to see my mistress and learn my fate from her lips, for every day made me more and more sensible that the happiness of my life depended on the answer she might give me.

I called several times in vain at the Lady Aboyne's, but without finding any opportunity of speaking with Mistress Farquharson alone, and I was beginning to think that I must perforce commit my passion to paper. Accident, however, gave me the very opportunity I longed for. I had been into the City to see my uncle and hear his latest news before I started for Culmford, and lo! as I sauntered westward along Cheapside, there was the Countess's chariot standing by the French mantua-maker's door, and Mistress Farquharson sitting in it, all by herself. I went up and made my compliments, and inquired if the day had been fixed for their departure.

"We go to-morrow," she replied; "my lady's friends think that the country is growing disturbed, and that it would be unwise putting off longer if we are to get through in safety."

"I have called half-a-score of times at your lodging," I said, reproachingly, "but you were never within. I had much to say to you—something that I very much wanted you to know."

"My Lady Aboyne has had so many things

to do, so many people to take leave of; and she has been buying so much. We carry quite a load of merchandise back to Scotland with us."

"You, Mistress Farquharson, are carrying something more than merchandise back with you to Scotland."

"What mean you? Papers? How did you come to know?"

"No, I do not mean papers. You are taking my heart away with you."

She leaned back in the chariot with hot face and downcast eyes, but returned no answer.

"Come, Bess," I said, "do not pretend that you did not know that I love you. I have loved you since that first night we met so strangely, and ever since I have not had a second thought in my head except yourself. I have striven for the past week to get an opportunity of telling you this, and now that the last chance has come I must speak. Say something to comfort me before we part."

"I do not know what to say," she murmured, with downcast eyes.

"Say that you believe me, that you will trust me, that you will try to love me. I ask no more at present."

She held her peace; but in her flushed face and panting bosom I read that she was not altogether indifferent to what I had said.

At this moment the Countess of Aboyne, obsequiously attended by her mantua-maker, appeared in the shop doorway.

"Will you not say one word to me, Bess—just enough to give me some little hope?" I pleaded in a low voice, for my Lady Aboyne was just then entering the chariot.

"You must ask for it in Scotland—in Braemar," she said, hurriedly; and then I had to pay my compliments and say farewell to the Countess.

"It is time I were going away," said her ladyship. "I shall have to account to Balmoral for his daughter. There would be swords drawn about her if we were to stay long here. Captain Beddoes and my cousin George Lockhart knocked their heads together last night trying first to pick up her fan, and did nothing but scowl at each other all the rest of the evening. But Bess is a sensible lass, and knows better than to fill her head with you London fly-aways. Adieu, Mr Bardolph; perchance we may meet in Scotland, whither the whole world seems to be journeying at present."

I called after the chariot that I trusted I might have so great a pleasure, and was left standing, hat in hand, in the middle of Cheapside in a deep reverie, from which I was aroused by a light touch on my arm and a slap on the back, both delivered simultaneously. Turning round sharply, I was surprised to recognise my *quondam* flame Mistress Stoughton—Myrtilla mine no more—attended by the gallant Captain Westoby, who seemed of a more hilarious and friendly disposition than he had ever shown to me before.

"Mr Bardolph, and dreaming in Cheapside," said Myrtilla, flicking me on the arm with her fan; "has the Muse struck you up in the street? And whose was the gay chariot that you have just parted from? And the two ladies in it? You look like Psyche when Cupid had taken wing, though it must be the other way about."

"Didst think it was a bailiff when I tapped thee on the shoulder?" cried the Captain, laughing; "or a Secretary's messenger? Nay, never look glum, man; the times change for everybody. I have seen the day, before my brother Tom died, when I would rather have faced a stand of pikes than the meekest of these gentry."

"And what have you been doing? and why have you not been to see me?" asked Myrtilla, with a half pout.

"Gad's me, I warrant he found better pastime!" cried the Captain. "Thinkst thou art the only woman in the world? Well, Mr Bardolph, here we are at the foot of the ladder. Going to be turned off next week.

You are not the man to bear malice, and will come and drink the bride's health in a bumper, I know."

When I could get in a word I proffered my warm congratulations, wished Myrtilla all happiness, and said I rejoiced to think she was making a match that would give my Lady Stoughton so much pleasure.

"Ay, ay," said the Captain, "the old dame is content enough; though, gad's my life! if she had got her way, she would have bound me in the beauforts with a vengeance; tied up everything that would tie, and settled everything, down to my boots, upon Betty here, all the while keeping a close fist upon her own purse-strings. But I even set Nibbs, my lawyer, at her; and he worried her to some purpose, I can tell you. Never was a prettier tussle. Dog and bear were nothing to it."

"Enough of that," said Myrtilla, with a stamp of her foot. "Other people are just as fond of money as mother. Ah! it is a mean, mercenary world, Mr Bardolph, where money goes for so much and love for so little;" and she positively ogled me as she said so.

"Come, come," said the Captain, "you can't say that I don't love you; and as for money, zounds! I'll put down George about with my lady any day. If I don't love you, why should I be trapesing here with you, buying gimcracks and furbelows for the bridal, when I might have been trying a horse with Nutcombe in the Park? Not love you indeed! I'd rather clothe a troop of dragoons than one woman."

"Peace, Captain," said Myrtilla, peremptorily; "and, Mr Bardolph, we shall always be friends, for old acquaintance' sake. You will—you will forget the past?"

I hastened to assure her that the past had never dwelt upon my memory—that I cordially rejoiced in her approaching happiness, which I begged to be allowed to celebrate in a proper epithalamium; that I was about to leave town for some time, but on my return I should have sincere pleasure in counting

Captain Westoby and his wife among my friends.

"Ay, ay," said the Captain, "I can guess where you are off to. A fool's errand, believe me. Wooden shoes won't go down with us. But hark ye, Bardolph, thou'rt a good fellow, though a Jacobite, and if ever thou runn'st thy head against Honeywood's dragoons, call out for Jack Westoby, and thou shalt have quarter and honourable usage, whatever may come of it."

I hoped I might never have occasion to put the Captain's generosity to the proof, but assured him that in a converse case he might depend upon my friendship; and we parted, Myrtilla, with her nose considerably elevated in the air, dragging her gallant soldier after her. Without vanity, I could see that she was piqued at my indifference, which certainly was not put on, for, with my heart full of Bess, I could only look back to my flirtation with Myrtilla as an amusement of my idler and less sincere days; and certainly I did not envy Captain Westoby either his wife or his mother-in-law. With the advent of Bess into my life a new world seemed to have opened up to me. She was a talisman that enabled me to distinguish between the true and the false; and my love for her threw a light upon both my inner self and my outer surroundings, that showed me what I was—no flattering prospect—as well as what I ought to be.

CHAPTER VII.

I FOUND matters at Culmford as gloomy and unsettled as elsewhere in the country. Up to this time my father had somehow, and on various pretexts, evaded taking the oaths, and was doing his best to put off the evil day in hopes that some intervention on behalf of the exiled family would save him from such an unpleasant ordeal. But the rumours of an immediate rising had sharpened the wits of the authorities, and one summons after another, each more peremptory than its predecessor, was pouring in upon him at a rate which gave him no alternative except to comply with the law or demit his living, a thing not to be thought of. As a martyr for conscience' sake my father more than ever required to fortify himself with port-wine, and he daily smoked many pipes of tobacco over the afflicted condition of Church and country without deriving any appreciable consolation from the process. He was too full of his own sorrows to be able to give me much sympathy in mine.

"This is worse than ever the Rump was," he would groan; "Old Noll put down the Church altogether, but now they keep it up that they may corrupt it. Look at the men who are selected for preferment nowadays. Whigs, my boy, and nothing but Whigs. Is there a bishopric vacant?—the most time-serving rogue politician is the fittest man for it, though he hardly knows his Greek accidence. Does a dean die?—then there is another place vacant for some puritanical Whig who will make a conventicle of his cathedral. Had her late gracious Majesty lived, I myself might have justly looked for some piece of preferment; for I know she was much struck by my sermon on the

Martyrdom of King Charles, which my dear friend Atterbury was good enough to place in her hands. But now the only preferment I can look for is the pillory or the prison, and be thankful if I can keep my gown on my back, if I take not these tyrannous oaths prescribed by this Dutch Diocletian."

I ventured to urge that many clergymen of very sound principles, the Bishop of Rochester among others, had taken the oaths as a temporary expedient, and an acknowledgment of the actual, though not necessarily the legitimate, Government."

"Very true," said my father, as he sipped his wine; "and who am I, that I should esteem myself more than that excellent prelate and father of the Church? But then, you see, I have preached against my neighbours who took the oaths at the first summons; and so, look you, it comes hard upon a loyal man and a clergyman to have to sway his conscience under such circumstances."

To change an unpleasant subject, I asked after my uncle, and how matters were getting on between the Rectory and the Manor; but with my father this was an equally gloomy topic.

"Verily," said my father, "the way of transgressors is hard; and poor Sir Robert is paying the penalty of his sins, as we must all do. In spite of all my counsels he married Joan Moonlight, doubtless at the suggestion of Satan; for what he wanted to marry her for neither I nor any one else ever could conceive — it was matter of common notoriety, known all over this side of the country. And as if this was not enough, he begets a son upon her, to the prejudice of his own flesh and blood, and the diversion of the title and estates from their proper and natural destination through me and you. But it will not do. The hand of Providence is visibly against them. The child is a puny unhealthy creature, and has been more than once at death's door already. That woman Joan will never be permitted to succeed in her vile plot against our rights."

Much as I was disposed to sympathise with my father's views, fortified as they were by religious reflections, it did seem to me that his view of Joan Moonlight's culpability was rather severe; and though I could well have spared my intrusive cousin, I was sorry when I thought of my uncle's grief and disappointment if the child were to die. I inquired if my father often saw Sir Robert, and what terms they met upon.

"Oh, we are good friends—good enough friends," returned my father; "that is, we speak when we meet, and I dine at the Manor whenever the company is decent, which is not so often as could be wished. I am no Pharisee or Puritan, and perhaps my presence may do some good to my brother's loose associates; but it does stir my bile to see the old port which my father brought home with him when he went on the Tangiers expedition with the Duke of Buckingham, washing out the throats of Dick Hyde the horse-coper, or Tom Frame the broken captain, whom

Marlborough drummed out of the army. I did venture to remonstrate against such wicked waste, and all the answer I got was that any one might drink the port who pleased, he preferred brandy. But he never sent me even a dozen of it, all the same."

"Do you think I should see my uncle, sir?" I asked. "When we last met we had some words about the unlucky youngster, and I fear I spoke with temper, and said more than I ought. But he has always been so good to me that I think I ought to make up matters if I might."

"Ay, ay; he came back from London swearing blood and 'ouns at your damned impudence, as he called it, and vowing that he would make a new will and leave you a groat. But he has had time to calm down since. 'Tell the lad,' he said to me, 'that though he cannot have the title and the acres, if the Lord spares the little 'un'—the only time I ever remember him mentioning the Lord's name except in swearing—'he'll find that his old uncle had some liking for him after all, in spite of his fleering and jeering, and that I am ready to take his hand yet if his d——d proud stomach will let him offer it.' He has a soft heart at the bottom, has my brother Bob, and had the makings of a better man in him but for drink and women and loose company. From which, I pray you, be warned by his example."

I then resolved to pay an early visit to the Manor and make my peace with Sir Robert; but an unexpected obstacle interposed in the person of my mother, who had considered herself specially insulted by her brother-in-law's marriage, and still more so when Lady Bardolph had presented him with an heir. Though the brothers had continued a species of friendly intercourse, and the Rector was nothing loath to dine at the Manor when the company would permit him to do so with decorum, or even when in Christian charity he had to strain a point to be present, my mother had never placed a foot in the desecrated family mansion, and never would do so as long as Dame Moonlight sat at the head of the table. There was some excuse for this; for certainly Lady Bardolph, in spite of her title, was not very suitable company for a lady of virtue and propriety. "How your father can lower himself by going to that house," was my mother's opinion, "is a marvel to me. It is all very well Sir Robert being his brother, but was it brotherly-like to insult the Rector of the parish by marrying a woman like Joan Moonlight?—honester wenches have beaten hemp in Bridewell, if all tales be true. And she had the impudence to call upon me, sitting in my mother-in-law's old coach, which had not been out these twenty years, and with the Bardolph necklace of pearls hanging round her red fat throat. But I soon settled her. When her name was announced, I merely said, 'Tell Joan Moonlight that her old friend the housekeeper, whom she has doubtless come to see, is too busy plucking fowls in the kitchen to gossip with her just now;' and she drove off swearing as strongly as Sir Robert himself that she would humble my pride for me. But she has not done it yet, though she did send Sir Robert to complain to the Rector. Your father talked about the woman of Samaria, as if she had anything to do with the matter; but a thousand women of Samaria, all together, would never make me, a Thirlwall of Northumberland, walk into any dining-room in the shire behind Joan Moonlight; and if you have any regard for your mother, you will never countenance that odious person by putting foot under the same roof where she is."

Woman's logic is a thing by itself. It is founded, not on right reason, but on feeling; and it was not of much use to point out to my mother that Sir Robert had treated me with the greatest kindness since I had been a child; that it would be most ungrateful of me not to call upon him in the old friendly way as before, when the Manor House had been my second home; and that I should cut a very mercenary figure before the world if I quarrelled with him, now that he had a direct heir of his own. As for Joan Moonlight, I urged that my mother had never objected to my going to the Manor when Joan occupied a much more equivocal position than she did now — my mother tapped her foot impatiently as if this argument was quite irrelevant; and as for the child, how could Lady Bardolph help having a child if heaven so willed it?—my mother shook her head in decided negative of this plea; and finally, that my father was well pleased, and even anxious, that I should endeavour to make up matters with my uncle.

"Oh yes; the Rector knows nothing about anything outside the pulpit. And these oaths and his fears for the Church are making him so mumpish that people can do anything with him. He has taken to a second bottle of port ever since the Queen died, and worries himself far too much about religion. Of course a parson should be religious, but you can overdo everything; and your father was far happier when he hunted twice a-week, and shot the other days, than now, that he sits sermon-making from Monday to Saturday, and writing to the Bishop of Worcester about the Revelations and the conversion of the King of France from Popery. I tell him he is losing his spirit, or else he would keep Sir Robert and that minx in their proper places, and not allow the Manor to be made a scandal to the county, when he might well shame the both of them for their sins from the pulpit itself."

In spite of my mother's prejudices, for which I could find excuse in the narrowness of their little society, and the undoubted grievance which she had to put up with in her undesirable relationship to the lady of the Manor, I quietly walked across to the Manor House one forenoon a few days after my arrival at the Rectory. Time passes lightly over our old country mansions, and changes outside only take place when there are greater changes within. It was three years since I had been last at the Manor; but the approach, the lawn, the trimly clipped shrubs, and the herb and flower plots, seemed to have stood still since I had left them. The sight of them made me also think that the intervening years, with all their eventful troubles and disappointments, had been a bad dream.

In the old days, I had come and gone to the Manor as I liked, and no one had ever taken notice of my movements. There was a knife and fork on the board for me, a horse in the stable, and a bed too whenever my uncle desired my presence overnight, which he very often did when there was good company, more to my enjoyment than my parents' satisfaction. I had considered myself free of the Manor, which had been not less my home than the Rectory. In those days when I had felt assured that some day the old house with its surroundings would be all my own, how little had I thought of it! How old-fashioned and common it had looked compared with some of the abbeys and castles that lodged the nobles and squires who neighboured us!

And yet what a goodly heritage it seemed, now that it was possibly lost to me for ever! On this occasion my visit was a ceremonious one, and was received as such at the Manor. I could soon discern that both my uncle and his wife had looked forward to it with considerable anxiety, and that I was being received with a formality that was altogether new and strange to me. My uncle came from the end of the hall as I entered, and held out his hand. "You are welcome, Edward," he said. "I heard that you had come to Culmford, and I thought you would not depart without seeing the old man and the old house once more. Nay, this is hearty. Your hand once again, my boy."

"You are very good," I replied. "I fear I vexed you the last time we met, and I certainly said things that I have been sorry for ever since. But I was out of sorts, and vexed about other matters, and I never meant to be ungrateful to you for all that you have done for me."

"Not another word," cried Sir Robert. "Say no more about it. Thou'st spoken like a true Bardolph. D—n me! we may be bad enough, my boy, and I daresay we are, but there is nothing mean about us—nothing mean. D—n me! come into the dining-room and have a cool tankard, for thou'st had a hot and dusty walk from the Rectory, I warrant me."

There was no resisting such hospitality, and when I had taken a sip from a deep tankard of claret flavoured with mint and sugar, I ventured to ask for Lady Bardolph — I could not bring my tongue to use the term aunt—and for the boy.

"Why, her ladyship is hearty—hearty," said Sir Robert, "but rather troubled at the thought of seeing you. People have put out their horns so much against her, d—n 'em! —and your mother at the Rectory has been so high and mighty ever since the child came, that the poor soul has felt like a baited badger. Not that I value their stand-aloofness a flea's skip. I married to please myself, and not to suit the county. Gadso! if I had but brought a painted madam down from Court, with all her airs and extravagances, the lands of Culmford and Prior's Grange would have told another story when I'm earthed in the old vault. But come away and see Joan, who will be sitting on nettles until she gets it over."

We found Lady Bardolph sitting in semi-state in her room, and evidently in a condition of nervous expectancy, which I did my best to allay by a very cordial greeting, with inquiries for her health, and compliments upon her looks.

"Why, Master Edward—I must call you Master Edward, it comes easiest to my tongue—I'm sure you're welcome here as the flowers in May. Sir Robert has kept fretting so much about any ill blood being between you and him, and when he is in his cups he do blame me for it all."

This, I said, was unreasonable, and there was no blame anywhere. My uncle, I assured her, ought to be very proud and happy that he had got a son to support and comfort his old age, and I expressed my eagerness to have a sight of this wonderful baby whose coming had raised such a commotion.

When it was solemnly brought in by its nurse, and nervously placed in my arms by Lady Bardolph, I stooped down and kissed the little face, and tried hard not to feel that the poor mite stood at all in my way. Alas! it was an aged-looking, withered, puny thing, with sad eyes, and a sallow face that suggested that among all the other advantages to which it had been born, the prime requisite of health had been left out. As I was looking meditatively down at the little face whose eyes were solemnly and wistfully looking into mine, the child began to kick and crow with some show of lustiness.

"He knows ye, 'fore gad!" cried Sir Robert, in high delight. "He knows a Bardolph face when he sees one. Why, 'tis thy big cousin, brat, that holds thee. Thou'lt never be as tall as he is, though thou livest as long as Methusalem."

"He has got your eyes, Master Edward," said the fond mother, bending over the infant, "and just your laugh, too. His face favours you all over, except his nose, which is Sir Robert's."

The compliment was not altogether flattering, but I did my best to look pleased.

"Ay, ay," said my uncle, stroking his face complacently; "most Bardolphs have squab noses, especially the heads of the house, though I never heard that it was reckoned a beauty-spot; and now, my lady, take thy child, and Ted and I will go to the stables and have a look at a horse or two I wish to show him." Giving the child another kiss, and handing him back to his delighted and flattered mother, I was led away by my uncle. Taking me to the stables was a sure sign that he had something serious to talk about, for it was there he discussed all his business with his steward and bailiffs and other officers of the estate, and he would have even consulted his attorney there for preference but for the fact that pen and ink were usually a necessity in their deliberations. Nor was I mistaken; for when we had gone over the horses critically, and discussed the merits and pedigree of each, the baronet took up his stand in an empty stall, and opened his mind to me.

He had been very angry with me at first, he said—but there! no more should be said about that—but he had never meant to cut me off altogether. He had not made up his mind yet how he was to provide for me, whether by leaving me Prior's Grange, which was unentailed and a comfortable little estate, or whether he should leave me a lump sum and let me do with it as I liked. "But I'll consult your father—yes, and Jobson"—his attorney—"clever fellow Jobson—will make it all right for you as far as wax and parchment can." And in the meantime he would go on giving me my old allowance, and see about the settlement of my debts. "Yes, yes, your Jews and goldsmiths, d——d bloodsucking rascals!—I'll give Jobson in charge to buy 'em out; 'ouns, but they'll find their match in him! And now we'll make a day of it, and have over the Rector for dinner, though he is but dull company nowadays, what with the oaths and his conscience, and his ravings about the Revelations. But a bottle or two of the old Tangiers port will drive all that nonsense out of his head. And I'd have thy mother too, and make a family gathering, but that I know it is no use asking her. Well, well, I mean no offence, and I don't blame her either. Women are so d——d hard upon each other when they get the chance. Your mother is a good woman, and I greatly respect her; but, like all her kind, she is d——d unforgiving."

My father came to dinner, and we had a hearty evening, in the course of which too many bottles of the Tangiers port were finished, and the baronet was borne off to bed abusing her ladyship, who had interdicted a further supply from the cellar, threatening to disinherit her brat, and vowing to me, as I supported him up-stairs by the head and shoulders, that I and I alone should have both Culmford and Prior's Grange, every hiccupped acre of them.

I spent some weeks very pleasantly between the Rectory and the Manor, doing my best to make up matters; and I so far succeeded. The child was ill with teething; I got my mother to accompany me to the Manor to see it. How the two dames succeeded in adjusting their difference I cannot tell, for Sir Robert and I were careful to leave them to fight it out between themselves. But I suspect Joan made her way round my mother by deferring to her ideas of doctoring the child—the most subtle and insinuating compliment that one matron can pay to another—and by a humility and deference that made my mother admit "that the woman had sense enough to know her place, and could behave herself when she liked in the presence of her betters,"—a considerable concession to start with.

After this, nothing was too good for me at the Manor House, and I verily believe Lady Bardolph would have waived her child's claims in favour of my pretensions if I had made the request. I was consulted about all its ailments, poor little weakling, and my advice listened to with as much deference as if I had been possessed of the skill of Garth or Radcliffe. It was a feeble child constitutionally, with an extraordinary capacity for catching all the infantile maladies that were agoing; and as I saw how much my uncle was bound up in it, I felt sorry for the slender thread of life upon which he had hung his affection.

"You'll be good to the boy, Ted, if aught happen to me," he said to me one day when in a melancholy mood. He had had a deep carouse with Captain Frame, Hyde the horse-coper, and other choice gentlemen, at the Royal Oak in Culmford the night before. "I sometimes think I'm not very long for this world.

I don't carry my drink so kindly as I used to do, and an extra bottle or two always makes me mindful of death next day. But when I am gone, you'll look after the boy, and keep him within bounds if you can. He will never have a constitution to carry him through such a life as I have led."

This I sincerely promised to do, and at the bottom of my heart I determined that I should do everything in my power to fulfil my uncle's wishes. I had taken quite a liking for the little lad, who was always brought to me when I came to the Manor, and never failed to crow and laugh his feeble little laughs when I took him in my arms. I assured my uncle that he might safely trust me always to befriend his boy.

"God knows whether he may need it," said he, with a sigh ; "it is but a breath of life that is in it, after all. Though it would be a sorry blow to me if aught befell him. Queer, is it not, that I, who could never bear brats or be bothered with them, should be so bound up in this one? I suppose it is because it is my own," he added gravely, after a minute's reflection.

The weeks went on, and I still lingered at Culmford, anxiously expecting to hear from my uncle Thirlwall, and longing for the time when I might follow Bess to Scotland. About her I never said a word, and bore my mother's reproaches for having allowed Mistress Betty Stoughton to slip through my fingers with cheerful patience. Every day there was fresh news of Northern risings and French descents, but the next day came a contradiction of the tidings. At last a newspaper reached us with the news that the Earl of Mar had stolen away from Court and taken shipping in the Thames, and it was believed that he had gone to join the Pretender in his invasion of Scotland. As I had entertained a shrewd suspicion that my mission to Scotland had something to do with Lord Mar's movements, I became more impatient than ever, and was thinking of going back to town, when one midnight the Rectory was roused by an express from my uncle Thirlwall with an urgent letter for myself.

"You will have the news," my uncle wrote, "that the Earl of Mar hath quitted the Court and gone to his own country secretly and in haste. I may now discover to you that he goeth to put himself at the head of King James's friends in that country; and that as soon as he has raised the standard, the Earl of Derwentwater, and other lords, with Mr Thomas Forster, whom you know, will put themselves at the head of King James's friends in the Northern counties. Now, my Lord of Mar hath much power in his own shires, and can raise many Highland men, but he lacketh the wherewithal to pay them, and hath been urgent with us in the City to grant loans to his Majesty's service. I and other true men have already made advances on the King's behalf, and would willingly sacrifice our last groat in his Majesty's cause; but we trust not this

Earl of Mar. He hath already tried more than once, and may do so again, to play a double game, and it is not for nothing that he hath got the nickname of 'Bobbing John' among his own countrymen. As I have been his mouthpiece to other good men, the King's friends here in London, I wish to be fully informed of what he does in Scotland, what strength he can make, and what his prospects of success may be, before we venture further money in this business; and I therefore wish you to go to his house in Braemar, whither there is a great number of nobles and gentry shortly to assemble in the King's behalf. You will please yourself about taking part in the war; but doubtless you will be right glad to strike a blow for King James, which will be to your advancement in the event of a happy restoration; but I specially desire you to keep your eyes well open, and advise me about the progress of affairs. Upon your reports will depend the extent to which myself and friends will commit ourselves to Lord Mar's rising, for we not only risk our money, but our necks also, if the Elector should happen to gain the day. You are therefore entreated to come with speed to London, and receive your charge. I have engaged a passage for you in a vessel to Aberdeen whose skipper is *honest* and may be trusted. You will carry letters to my correspondent there, and will give out that you are travelling on my business. Commend me to my sister and brother, and burn this as soon as you read it."

That same night I took horse for London.

BOOK II.

THE GREAT HUNTING

CHAPTER VIII.

The first day of September found me in a smack called the Nicholas of Aberdeen, John Nepper, master, bobbing about like a cork in a tub of barming ale, off a high rocky coast, which, the seamen told me, lay between Aberbrothock and Montrose, in the shire of Angus. From the time I had put foot on this infamous craft in the Thames, until the moment when I was able to come on deck and look about me, keeping all the while a good hold upon the railing, a part of my life had been lost. Cramped up in a narrow bunk, which, though not large enough to turn in, was still big enough to permit me to be bumped about when the vessel rolled, which she constantly did save when she varied the movement by pitching, I lay for five mortal days and nights, half dead and more than half damned, for I was keenly alive to the miseries of my situation. Imagine all the sufferings of all the unfortunates from the days of Jonah to those of Panurge, add them together, or multiply them if you like, and the sum-total will fall far short of what I endured. The winds seemed to keep a saturnalia, the waves bore them company, the Nicholas pitched and tossed, rose and fell, now balancing herself on the top of a wave, now diving to the bottom of a gulf, as if she were going to join her ancient godfather. True, I did not see her thus conduct herself; but sea-sickness hath the virtue of endowing the stomach with keen perceptions, which made every motion of the ship as patent to my senses as if I had been standing at the helm directing her course. Ah, the misery of it! Why had I none of the *robur et æs triplex* which the Venusian attributes to the man who first committed his skiff to the foaming billows? Would, indeed, that some of the *æs triplex* had lined my stomach! But why narrate my sufferings? When ever was the sea-sickness accounted worthy of sympathy? As for me, I daily and nightly enumerated my pains in the tongue of the Pantagruelian philosopher, which hath an eloquence deeper than words, "*Holos, holos, holos! Zalas, zalas, zalas! Be, be, bous, bous, bous.*"

It was in vain the old sea-dog of a skipper had thrust his head into the cabin, admitting at the same time commingled odours of tar, pitch, and herrings, with other not less fetid essences to me unknown, and had sought to administer comfort by telling of the quickness of the voyage and by pressing proffers of refreshment. What was it to me that we were "spanking past Flamborough Head like a hound-dog on the links of Don"? Flamborough Head, as every one knows, is in England; and Aberdeen, which was my destination, if I lived to get there, lay Lord knows how many miles to the northward. Nor was there any savour in his "dram of right Nantz" or "cup of native peat-reek usquebaugh"; and as for the Athole brose, which he described as a compound of honey and *aqua vitæ*, and a "sovran cure for all maladies short of mortality"—meaning it, I suppose, in his good nature, as a sort of *coup de grâce* to put an end to my agonies—I would none of it. The mere mention of the mess at once insinuated itself into my inwards, and, just as if I had really partaken of it, I fairly *be be boused* the captain out of the cuddy.

But as I did not die I needs must live, and on the morning of the sixth day I began to long for food; and bidding the cook prepare a meal for me, I crawled on deck, and steadying myself by the ship's side, looked around me. Ill as I was, the grandeur of the scene roused my feelings, for there was a stern unity in its wild features that at once struck the onlooker with the idea that Nature was calming down from one of her angry and furious passions. So must have seemed the face of the deep after Neptune uttered his "Quos Ego." From the seaward, race after race of white-topped billows rolled surging in towards the coast like an unbroken charge of white horses tossing their heads and waving their manes. Looking to the land, I saw an irregular line of rugged towering cliffs, against which the waves were frantically dashing with a thundering echo which was audible though we were some miles away, and shrouding the rocks in sheets of white foam which sometimes rose high in the air like jets from a fountain. In all the angry sea there was no vessel to be seen except our own craft, which doggedly ploughed its way through the turbulent waters, now rolling heavily as a wave struck her quarter, now righting herself and again straining forward. But even as I looked, the sun broke through the heavy masses of cloud which were following in our rear, and casting a bright light in the direction of the land, brought into view fields of green grass and yellow corn stretching back from the rocky shore, and sloping inland until they were lost in the dark woodlands which bounded the view. Where the rocky line was broken at infrequent intervals I could descry white cottages perched on the slopes, and like the cast-away mariner at the first sight of a human habitation, my heart felt lighter in the neighbourhood of men living upon dry land.

"There, master," said the skipper, coming aft to where I stood—"there is a caller morning that will put heart into you again. A tight fresh breeze from France, blowing even o'er from Dunkirk—nane of your meeserable Hanoverian winds that make a man as melancholy as a gib-cat. And there is the Red Head of Angus," pointing to a beetling brown-looking precipice on the lee bow; "when that is past, the Nicholas thinks she has her head hamewith, and the voyage will be by in a blink."

He was a stout old grizzled sea-dog, with a brick-red face and stubbly grey beard. His head was buried in the depths of a furry cap, from underneath the snout of which glittered a pair of keen grey eyes. He had a shrewd, daring, but not unkindly face, and my conscience reproached me for the churlishness with which I had repelled his proffered attentions in the hours of my agony.

"Ay, ay," said he good-naturedly, when I made some sort of an excuse for my ill-temper, "sea-sickness is a sair thing. No that I ever had it myself that I can mind on; but I have sailed the seas since ever I could hold on by a rope's end, and had even crossed the Line on the account before I was well into my teens. But I can make an allowance for landsmen," he added, with good-natured condescension. "And now that you are oot o' dock, ye'll come below and try and pick something."

A plentiful repast awaited me in the cabin, which did ample credit to the hospitality of the Nicholas. There was toothsome fish curiously cured in the smoke, fresh mutton cutlets, a dish of Scotch collops, and the remains of a huge pasty. The choice of beverages was correspondingly liberal—from Nantz brandy to

Bordeaux claret; but I gave my preference to the dish of tea which the cook had prepared for me, although my choice evidently lowered me in the estimation of the skipper, who followed me down to take, as he said, his meridian, having broken his fast long before I had turned out of my bunk.

"Ye maun learn to tak' your dram when ye land in Aberdeen," said the captain, as he poured out for himself a large rummer of Hollands, which he proceeded to sip, though it was quite innocent of water. "Tea is just drink for the women-folk, and it is incredible to think how it is debooshin' them. I have run ashore as many as half-a-dozen chests o' the trash on a dark night at Girdleness. It is a sad, wastefu' practice, is tea-drinking;" and he shook his head in grave reprehension as he tossed off the remains of his bumper.

It was getting quite a common beverage among the London ladies, I remarked, and as necessary to their existence as the scandal which went along with it.

"Nae doubt, nae doubt; and sorry would I be to see our douce country lasses copying the ways of sic baggage."

"Come, my friend, you are hardly charitable to my countrywomen. I am quite prepared to admire yours, whom I have not yet seen, and I am afraid your experience among the English ladies cannot have been fortunate, if you set them so at naught."

"I ken little aboot them," responded the captain, shaking his head again. "I am a married man myself, wi' a wife and four bairns at the Shore-head, and no in the habit o' consortin' with the queans who come about Wapping when the ship touches, to help the lads to splice the mainbrace. But I have seen madams in the City that I thocht would hae a'maist turned my stomach, — paintit faces, daubbit in patches, their hair fuzzed on the tops of their heads like a Russian man's furred hat, and ne'er a decent snood nor a cockernony amo' them; and their bare breasts and their wappit-in waists! And to think mair than a', that this unchancy Union may soon bring sic sights to our ain doors."

"You are no friend to the Union, then?" I remarked inquiringly.

"I'm but a plain man, and it signifies little what I think o' sic matters. As lang as there are dark nichts to let ane see to run a cargo frae Dunkirk or Bordeaux, kings and Unions come little in my road. But mair skilly men than me do say that it is a sair humiliation for Scotland, that had held the grip for mair than a thousand years in spite o' a' that Danes and the English could do to dispossess her, and aye kent gey weel how to guide her ain, to hae her liberty bargained for and sauld, as if it were a five-mark feu-holding. And it doesna become a country that has keepit her hand upon the sword sae lang to hae crown and sceptre ta'en awa' frae her, and her Parliament put out o' doors—deil mean it for selling o' her—and a' just because they couldna resist the wadge of Aachan."

"But if your Parliament was so corrupt

as to be bribed, my good friend, methinks you sustain little loss in getting rid of it."

"Maybe; but I see not weel what reason a wheen Whig lords, maistly frae the Lothians, and Commissioners of burrows-touns, hae to mak' awa' wi' the birthright o' the people. Esaus, ilk ane o' them! Ye'll maybe hae heard what the Whig lord said when he buttoned the purse of gold into his breast-pouch that he got for handing o'er the crown o' Scotland to the English Commissioners—'there is the fag-end o' an auld sang'—neither more nor less."

"But surely there must be advantages to your country in becoming part of a settled and prosperous nation like England. A union with a wealthy nation must benefit a poor one—I mean no offence."

"As for our poverty," said Captain Nepper, deliberately filling himself another bumper of Hollands, "I trow we have never had to ask alms. And as for ony participation puir Scotland is likely to get in the riches of

England, it's just clean the ither way. Since this hapless Union the country is just overrun by English land-loupers, ilk ane tryin' what he can grab. A' the riff-raff o' the south, ilka offisher that has been broken in the Low Countries for cowardice, ilka foundered rake that has been driven out o' London by his creditors, are a' flockin' to Scotland like corbies to a dead sheep; and they maun be collectors, and customs officers, and tide-waiters, naething less, at ilka port in Scotland; and if we daur to say a word against them, far less to raise a hand, we maun e'en be taken up and clapped into the Tolbooth as rebels and Jacobites. A band o' thieves, that is just what they are — waur nor the worst caterans that ever sorned out of Badenoch or Lochaber!"

"Well, the business is done now, and I am afraid you will have to make the best of it."

"I'm no so sure of that; there are twa-three chiefs and lords north of the Tay that have had little to say about it, and would like to have mair. And some think that a bargain made wi' a queen who was oor ain countrywoman could hardly be expected to stand wi' this new king, wha we ken naething aboot, except that he is a German land-louper, just glaggering doubtless to get at the gold of the country; for if a' tales be true, he had little enough at hame to turn his hands wi'."

"I am afraid, then, you are no friend to King George and the Protestant succession."

"As for King George, if he keep his hands aff me, I'll warrant I'll keep mine aff him. And as for the Protestant succession, I gae to the kirk myself o' a Sunday when in port, but I hae seen enough o' the wordle to ken there are Papists and Papists. There are the Papists in France, as canny and couthy folk as ever I drank a dram wi' or bargained wi' for a cargo. And there are oor ane Papists, poor bodies, decent folk in their way, but sair held doon by the law. I have given mair than ane o' their priests a quait cast across when they wanted to be put on shore without the sherra kennin' o' them."

"The account you give, my worthy friend, of your loyalty is not very assuring. I shall begin to fear next that you are a Jacobite yourself."

"Nae mair than your honour, nor yet maybe so muckle; for King James may bide at Bar-le-Duc for the rest o' his days, unless I'm duly chartered to bring him hame in the ordinary way o' business. But gin you're no Jacobite, what micht be taking ye tae Scotland at this time, when, gin the Hielands are no up already, they maun be just on the very eve o' gaein' oot?"

"I thought you knew my errand to Aberdeen—to look after some merchant business for Mr Thirlwall of Cheapside, with whom I believe you are acquainted."

"Ay, ay, I know Mr Thirlwall—a good man, and liberal in his dealings; but I have done business for him before across the water, and if he had wanted any of his debtors in Aberdeen looked aifter, or wished to speir aboot the makin' o' plaidens or fingrams, stuffs or serges, I'm thinkin' you're hardly the man he would have sent on sic an errand."

"You do not give me credit for much sense, then, since you think me unfitted for such a simple business."

"Na, na; I hae seen o'er mony o' your sort to make any mistake. I brought o'er Colonel Hooke from St Germains the year Seven, and the year after I took Captain Fleming, Lord Wigton's brither, and Mr Arnot off a French frigate and landed them safe at Slains Castle wi' my Lord Errol, though there was a Queen's cruiser hovering about between Buchanness and the mouth o' Don, ance errand to look out for them. And mony a ton o' gunpowder and stand o' arms have I conveyed across baith to Slains and Dunottar, that wasna meant for the service of the Government, I trow."

"And suppose, then, that I had some interest in learning the state of the country, I presume I might trust you, if, as you say, you have been concerned in such Jacobite trafficking."

"Ay, ye may trust me, sure enough. Jock Nepper is a man that never sauld frien' nor country, far less the stranger committed to his chairge. Ye wad be no nevoy of Mr Thirlwall's if ye werena *honest;* and it may be I may be able to gie ye a lift on the way where ye are ga'en, if, as I guess, ye're for the Highlands, where the lords and chiefs are gathering about Lord Mar, even as the Israelites flocked to Dauvit in the Cave of Adullam."

"You think my Lord Mar, then, will be found in the Highlands?" I asked; "I had almost hoped I might meet him in Aberdeen."

"Na, ye'll no dae that; that pear's no ripe yet. The Hielands is the powder-magazine of Scotland; if ye want to make an explosion, it is there ye maun put tae the match. Ye'll hae to seek Lord Mar in his ain country, where, I'se warrant, he has as mony redshanks round him by this time as would eat up a' the cattle in the three northern counties, if they were let loose to reive them. And now I maun gae on deck again; but if ye hae nae objection, we'll drink to his maist sacred majesty King James the Eighth, and a black cast to a' the Whig rin-the-routs."

And thereupon he again filled up his rummer, the contents of which seemed to have no more effect upon him than if it had been so much water, and pouring out for me a glass of claret, he drained his own liquor with "*Slainte*, as the Hielandmen say. Here is to King James, and a good voyage home to him."

Shortly after, I went on deck again, feeling much refreshed after my meal, and walked up and down with the skipper, who gave me much information about the north of Scotland, and of the disposition of the people towards King James. What he had to tell was not very heartening. It seemed to me that those who had nothing to lose would be the most zealous partisans of a rising; that even those who were naturally of loyal principle were reluctant to risk their fortunes unless the King himself were to come, backed with all the power of France; and that the more wealthy magnates would either remain neutral until one or other side got the victory, or else take arms in support of the Hanoverian Government. The Presbyterians, where they were not swayed by national feelings against the Union, and in favour of a Stuart king, would be directly hostile through their fear of Popery, which, together with an idolatrous worship of the Sabbath, I discovered to be the essential characteristics of their faith. The Churchmen, who were in a small minority except in the north-east of Scotland, might be depended upon to aid the Restoration. But it was upon the power of the Highlanders and the zeal of their chiefs that the captain founded his best hopes of success.

"It is sax-and-twenty years since they had the last big outbreak; it was in Claverhouse's time, and except for a few private *spreachs* and herships here and there into the Lowlands, the Hielandmen have for the maist part been thrown upon their ain resources. Now nae Hielandman of spirit will work gin he can avoid it, and when they canna get their meat off o' the muirs or out o' the waters, they maun just fa' back upon their chiefs, wha are at their wits' end for means to maintain their men. They miss the siller they got for keeping quiet in the auld Queen's time; and now they have little between them and ruin but a raid upon the Lowlands and their chances of the spulzie; and troth, between ourselves, it matters little to mony o' them whether it be in James's name or in George's that they fecht, provided they get some escape from their present straits."

Here the captain was called forward by his mate to attend to some matter respecting the internal affairs of the vessel, and I was left alone to my meditations. These were not inspiriting. The captain seemed a shrewd, sensible man, prepossessed too in favour of the Stuart cause, and yet what he said about it did not give me much heart for my mission. It was the cause of desperate men—men who had nothing to lose; and here was I plunging myself into the thick of it. Well, I had about as little to lose as most of them; but still I had my life, and I could not at that moment see much prospect of glory in being shot on a Scotch hillside, or affording the good citizens of London the excuse for a day's outing to Tyburn. Somehow the cause seemed to be too doubtful to repay martyrdom. If James and Divine Right and Passive Obedience were lofty watchwords, there was something at least to be said for George and Liberty and the Protestant Religion. I began to wish that at that moment I were seated again at the Cocoa Tree, reviling the Hanoverian usurper in peace and safety, or handing round lampoons upon Mesdames Kielmansegge and Schulenburg, the charming Elosine and Melosine, in whom the present Defender of the Faith found comfort, instead of scudding along this iron-bound coast with its shadowy background of wild and rugged mountains, amidst which I might expect to find those savages who were to be my future yoke-fellows in the task of raising up anew the pillar of hereditary monarchy. The reflection was disquieting, and I could only picture the most gloomy results to myself and my fortunes. From the first moment I had been seized with sea-sickness on board this accursed craft, I had felt predestined to failure; and yet there was one spark of light amid the darkness. Somewhere behind these frowning and inhospitable-looking mountains, I should find my Queen Elizabeth—yes, my Bess; and this thought in itself was enough to dispel the vapours.

CHAPTER IX.

We sailed swiftly by the coast of Mearnshire all the long autumn afternoon. A fair wind on the starboard quarter sent the vessel lightly through the waters, which were now beginning to subside after the gale, and the motion of the ship became less violent, so that I could freely walk about with Captain Nepper, and talk with him about the country of which we got a distant view, and of the wild mountains which we could see here and there in the background. For some hours we skirted along a low rocky shore interspersed with large stretches of sand, which in front of us again gave place to a giant sea-wall of cliffs standing up two hundred feet above the water's edge. To my fancy the scene suggested the idea that here Nature was trying to relax her sterner features by clothing them with her softer and more genial charms. The harsh and rugged lines of the rocky rampart that girt in the land, were crowned by green and yellow fields of grass and corn, to which the western sun lent a tinge of gold; dark woods, and frequent clumps and belts of trees, still further diversified the view. And beyond all the brown hills, over which the broken clouds that had been tossed off the sea were playing in a glory of rich and wonderful colour. As the shadows began to creep up towards the mountains, and the sun to decline behind them, some of the higher peaks came out in bold relief, like evening sentinels set to guard the Highland country that lay beyond them. My eye wandered over a scene so strange to me, and rested now upon the signs of life that the country presented: the old four-square castle crumbling to decay upon some precipitous perch of rock; the more modern manor-house, which, though aspiring to the comforts and luxuries of our age in its appearance, and in the parks and shrubberies from amid which it peeped, still clung to such relics of feudal times as miniature turrets and battlements; the white farm homestead with its out-buildings and peasants' cottages; and the low huts of the fisher-folk which dotted the mouths of every gully where the rocky coast-line had been broken through. I marvelled if I was to traverse this region upon which I was now gazing, and whether the rude turmoil of war was to break in upon these homes that seemed so peaceful and still in the shadows of evening.

"Keep her aff a point or twa till we pass the Todhead, Tammas," said Captain Nepper to the steersman; "when we pass Crawton Bay we maun shorten sail a wee and lie aff Dunottar until it is dark. There may be sodgers in Stanehive; and gin there are no, there are sure to be the gauger and the customs officer comin' rummagin' aboot seekin' to spy fairlies. Wherefore I say, keep her weel to the wind, Tammas Cowie."

"You have then some contraband on board, captain, that you wish to evade the visit of the exciseman?"

"Troth, and you yourself are the maist excisable article on board this trip, Maister Bardolph, for these revenue cattle are ane and a' o' them just spies o' the Government. The cargo itself, which belongs to your uncle, will pay its dues honestly at the pier-head of Aberdeen. But I have twa or three bit boxies for the young Yearl Marischal, which may as weel be landed to save him trouble, especially as we pass his ain door of Dunottar, as ye may say."

"And this Earl Marischal—he held a commission under Queen Anne, I remember—is he a friend of the Government?"

"He is onything but that," answered Captain Nepper, sententiously; "and I'm thinkin' yer maist likely to soon forgaither wi' him where ye're ga'en. Thae boxes are fu' o' gude

Spainish swords and horse-pistols to airm his troopers wi'."

"Lucky there are none of the Government cruisers about," I commented. "These arms would have been an awkward evidence against us had we been overhauled."

"Gie the Nicholas a sma' bit o' law and a fair wind, and deil a cruiser that floats under the two crosses will overhaul her as lang's I'm at the helm. And before I struck my flag to ony o' them I would e'en try which was hardest, the Nicholas's ribs or they stane craigs yonder," pointing with a wave of his hand towards the rocky barriers of the land. "There are coves there where a man micht lie hidden a lifetime, though a' the king's forces, baith land and sea, were on the outlook for him."

Thinking my estate gracious in not being called upon to run such risk, I forebore further suggestions of danger, and inquired whether the people of the Mearns were generally well affected to the king across the water.

"They're a dour hard-headed race, the men o' the Mearns," said the captain, reflectively; "and there's nae doot mony Episcopalians among them who have cause to wish weel to King James, and there are mony ithers o' them that bude to ride wi' the Yearl Marischal and their ain lairds aboot the Braes, whether they will or no; but I doot if King James himsel' could raise an airmy in the How o' the Mearns. The folk are gey weel off there for being wullin' to gae out. And noo I shall take my trick at the wheel, if you will alloo me, and let Tammie get his supper. The nicht is fa'in, and we maun lie to off Dunottar until they see our signal frae the castle."

"And when do you expect to be in Aberdeen?" I asked, as the captain relieved Tammie at the helm.

"The morn's morning, if we can save the tide," he answered shortly; and seeing that he did not wish to be further disturbed, I left him and went below.

Throwing myself down upon a hard-cushioned locker, I relapsed once more into my gloomy meditations, and almost regretted the sea-sickness which had made me forget the troubles of my mind in the distresses of my body. The more I thought over my condition, the more I felt that I was taking a reckless and precipitate course. Here I was on the point of landing in a strange and wild country, which, from all I had heard of it, could not be more than semi-civilised; among strangers too, who, from what was currently reported of the Scots, were but little to be trusted. We had been led to believe in London that the Scots to a man would stand up on behalf of their exiled king; but if Captain Nepper was correct, this was far from being the case. It was true many of the Scots lords were Jacobites, but I had seen too many of them out-of-elbows, and suitors for places and pensions, and even for money to carry them back to Scotland at the Treasurer's levees in the Queen's time, to build much upon their power. And there was the Highlands, the chiefs and their clans; they at least might be presumed to be willing to take the field; but though they turned out to a man, were they a sufficient force to cope with Government and the army it could put into the field? The thought oppressed me that by the mission my uncle and his friends had imposed upon me, the support of the London merchants would be largely measured. A too favourable opinion of the prospects of the cause on my part might launch men into unripe insurrection, which would cost them their lives, and those whom I represented their fortunes. On the other hand, if I were swayed too much by my own gloomy forebodings, I might throw cold water on a just and hopeful issue, which, if by any chance it should succeed, would leave me and my friends outside all hopes of royal favour. Why did I not stay at home and dabble in the fashionable treason of the times, writing elegant epistles to St Germains with Atterbury and Arbuthnot, drinking King James's health with Wyndham and Shippen behind locked doors, fasting publicly in the ordinary on the thirtieth of January, and walking out with an oak-leaf in my hat on the twenty-ninth of May? I had been proud to think that I had had my hand in all the paper plots for the King's restoration from the time of my leaving college, and vaunted myself not a little upon the reputation I bore for a dark and dangerous Jacobite among the frequenters of Ozinda's in St James's Street. But all that was stage-play to the stirring realities with which I was now to be confronted. I was out of my element. I felt that my enthusiasm in the Stuart cause was waning, now that it was to be put to the proof. Had I ever really cared for it? If it came to that, had I ever really cared for anything—anything, that is, beyond my own ease, my own interests, and my own pleasures? Had my life about town really thus far weakened my nerves—my sense of honour—my ambition?

But amid all this despondency I had still something to raise my heart. Behind those brown mountains that I had looked upon this afternoon was the mistress of my heart, the loadstar that, more than King James and his crown, was drawing me on to my destiny, whatever it might be. To see her once more; to walk hand in hand with her amid her native woods; to look again into the tender, languishing depths of those grey eyes, clear and fresh, and sweet as the purest fountains; to have that soft cheek rest again on my shoulder; to hear the broken and trembling whispers that answered my vows of love,—were not these prospects worth a journey to Aberdeen—nay, even to the frozen Pole itself? I should see her in whom Nature had perfected her ideal, enhanced by all the chaste surroundings of nature. How different, how incomparably beyond the petty artificial superfineries of the Court and town-bred beauties, whose most cultivated modes were vulgar when placed by the side of *her* simple and pure tastes! I, who had sung the perfections of Phyllis, Lesbia, Chloris, Corinna, and I know not how many others, with satisfaction to them and to myself, and with the approbation of Button's and Tom's in Great Russell Street, could never twist a line into verse when the theme was Bess Farquharson. She had promised to sew with her own hands King James's white cockade into my hat, and surely so fair a dame never sent knight forth to battle. Was I, then, going to prove a *fainéant?* Was I to begin to calculate the issue before the sword was drawn from the sheath—to be a stumbling-block in this great enterprise? No! away with the thought! I should win my spurs in the wars of King James, and my lady should wear my honours. I should—— Here my day-dreams, or rather my night-reveries—for darkness had closed down upon me—were interrupted by a noise and bustle on the deck above me, and the irregular tossing of the Nicholas betokened that Captain Nepper was lying to, and had taken in sail.

The cabin was by this time quite dark, and with difficulty I groped my way to the companion and clambered on deck. Out toward the sea a faint moonlight played upon the water, but the Nicholas was now under the shadow of a tall cliff, which seemed to tower two or three hundred feet straight above the white breakers that dashed upon its foundations. Above the cliff I could discern the outlines of a fortress or castle, and the moon, scarcely half full, which was already sinking in the west, threw a confused mass of buildings, walls, turrets, and battlements into a dark relief. Here and there lights were flitting about evidently on a rampart, as if the signals which the Nicholas had just finished making had aroused the garrison.

"Stand by to get up thae boxes," said Captain Nepper to his crew; "quick now, lads, and quietly as you can. And, Tammie, show a lantern at the gangway, and be ready to throw a rope as soon as the boat hails."

"That is Dunottar Castle," said the

captain, turning to me, "and it is ane o' the strongest haulds in Scotland, be the other where it may. And there, where ye see a licht or twa glimmerin' at the head o' the little bay round the corner, is the toun o' Stanehive. Deil gin it were twal miles farther aff, for I misdoot they may see our signals to the castle and send their boats rampagin' aff to find oot what is ado." Before the cases of arms were got up the main hatchway and piled upon the deck, the plash of oars was heard, and a voice hailed us from the darkness of the deep.

"Ahoy! the Nicholas, ahoy! Why, you're as dark as your name-father, Old Nick himself. Aboard there! Why don't you show a light and fling us a rope's end?"

"It's that daft young buckie James Keith himsel'. He'll raise the country wi' his clamjamfray," muttered the captain; "wave the lantern, Tammie, and throw them a rope as soon as ye see the boat. Be brisk now, lads, and get the tackle forward to lower away."

And almost before the crew had executed his orders with the quietness and celerity of practised smugglers, a man scrambled up the side of the Nicholas and leaped lightly on the quarter-deck.

"Well, old Tarry-breeks, what luck this voyage? and have you brought the arms? and what's the news from London? and have you brought anything for us from across the water this trip?"

To this string of questions the skipper replied with national indirectness. "I am surprised, Mr James, that ye suld come on board wi' siccan a hurly-burly. It will be a marvel to me if ye haena roused the redcoats in Stanehive, and we'll hae the customs and them boardin' us belive, wha will nae doot be curious to ken what for we are breakin' bulk here; and that's as little to your advantage as to mine."

"If it is the redcoats ye fear, ye needna fash your thumb about them. We were drilling our gunners this afternoon, and happened to train a couple of pieces over the town, and the soldiers thought we were going to fire upon them and departed incontinently. We saw the last of them at quick march across the muir of Barras, and I warrant they do not slacken till they reach Montrose."

"Ay, ay," returned the skipper, shaking his head, "and sae the ploy is beginnin'. Well, God send it end wi' a' oor heads on oor shouthers, and nae man's neck langer than nature meant it to be."

"Tuts, you old sea-corbie!" said the other, scornfully; "how should it end but in one way, and that the right way, when all the gentlemen in Scotland are arming for their King? These new English gaugers have cowed your spirit, John. But how is this?" he added suddenly, as his eye fell upon me for the first time; "a stranger, an Englishman on board at such a time! Is this well, John Nepper?"

As he advanced a step in my direction

and stood right under a lamp that hung from the main-yard, I could scan the appearance of the new-comer. He was a slim youth, little more than eighteen, but with all the decision and command of a man of double his age; a little above the middle size, his figure, though spare, showed signs of activity and endurance; and his handsome brown face won my confidence, notwithstanding that his keen eyes flashed out at me from beneath a pair of thick eyebrows with no very friendly gaze. Within the last few years, when the name of Field-Marshal Keith has been blazed all over Europe in the Gazettes as one of the greatest lieutenants of the great King of Prussia, I have often bethought myself of my first strange meeting with this eminent character.

Captain Nepper hastened to assure Mr Keith that I was *honest*, and a well-wisher to the King, and that in fact I had come to Scotland in his service — an assertion which, though not strictly correct, I did not think necessary to contradict. I was, he said, the nephew of Mr Thirlwall of London, of whom Mr Keith had doubtless heard as zealous in King James's cause, and the nephew and heir of Sir Robert Bardolph of Culmford, a family well known for its loyalty and honour. The look of dark suspicion quickly left Mr Keith's face as he made me a polite bow and said—

"Pardon me for mistaking you for a Hanoverian, but as yet we do not know friends from foes. I regret that my good lord and brother the Marischal is not here; but he, I am sure, would be anxious that Mr Bardolph should accept such rough hospitality as Dunottar can at present offer, if you would care to land; and if you have any business with any of the leaders who are banding themselves for King James in this north country of ours, it will be my duty, as it is my pleasure, to give you any assistance that we can render."

"I thank you, sir," I returned, "but my errand here is to my Lord Mar, and my instructions are to land at Aberdeen, where I am to receive intelligence of his lordship's whereabouts, and then to proceed to join him wherever he may chance to be."

"His lordship," says Mr Keith, "is at present in his own country of Braemar, whither he has summoned all the loyal nobles and chiefs to a great hunting, such as we read of having been held in times long ago. What may come of the gathering I know not, but so many brave gentlemen are not likely to meet without drawing the sword for the King. For weeks past we have had many lords, even from as far as the southron border, passing through Dunottar on their way to the Earl,—Traquair, Carnwath, Nithsdale, and I know not how many other lords; besides all the Angus and Perth barons, who have taken through the passes. As for myself, I merely wait here expecting the Earl Marischal's orders to lead our Mearns retainers to Mar's standard, and to keep some kind of order in this old rookery here," glancing at the dark keep above us, "over which, if it were daylight, you would see the old Scots lion waving with 'No Union' for a new motto."

"And what better watchword could ye wuss?" put in Captain Nepper, "unless ye even put 'remember Darien' alongside o' it."

"Ay, John, there are wrongs there too to be redressed," said Mr Keith; "but never mind, there will be a change of tables when King James comes o'er the water." And again turning to me, he said, "If you will not do me the honour to land at our castle, I may still be of use to you. You are likely to go straight to Lord Mar, for I do not think Aberdeen, under its present magistrates and with soldiers in the town, will be a safe residence for you any length of time. A gentleman who is attached to our family—a learned man who is a professor in one of the colleges in Aberdeen—will leave the town to-morrow or the day after with important despatches for my brother, and he will be glad to give you his company and guidance on the way, for he knows the country well. John Nepper, you will see Professor Meston of the Marischal College, and enjoin him from me to do anything he can to aid Mr Bardolph's wishes. You know the Professor?"

"Fine that," returned the skipper; "there's no a change-house frae the Justice Port to the Upper Kirkgate where the Professor isna weel kent."

"Umph! *dulce est desipere in loco,* as he would say himself. The Professor is a man of wit as well as culture, and his society will amuse if it does not please you. And now I see my boat is ready, and I will lay no further embargo on your course. And there stands John Nepper with the brandy-bottle, impatient for me to take *doch-an-dorris* and be off."

King James's health having been duly honoured, Mr Keith, with a polite hope that we would soon meet again and improve our acquaintance, disappeared over the side. The sails were quickly set; Tammie, who appeared to be a sort of second in command, again took the helm, and the Nicholas was quickly brought to the wind, and dashed forward through the water.

"If ye'll tak' my advice, Mr Bardolph, ye'll gae doun below and sleep a blink. The nicht air here is fell chill for you Southrons. Gin the wind hauld we should be at Aberdeen by the morning, and as ye kenna what may be before you, ye'll be a' the better o' a good rest. Anither dram, just by way o' nicht-cap."

Resisting this proffer, I went below and betook myself to my cabin, where, throwing myself on my bed, I was in a few minutes fast asleep.

CHAPTER X.

"AIBERDEEN and time till it!" was Captain John Nepper's morning salutation to me as I came on deck next morning, having been aroused by the cries of the men taking in sail, and a louder than usual stamping over my head.

It was a lovely morning and a fair scene that met my eye, as I stood and looked around me, fanned by the light cool air that came off the ocean. The Nicholas was rounding a high rocky headland, crowned with scrubby whins and broom, and before us lay the estuary of the Dee, and a line of foaming surges, marking the struggle between river and ocean being fought out over the harbour bar. Nestling in the hollows of the low slopes and ridges, sheltering itself as it were from the fierce wintry blasts from the North Sea, lay an old grey town, picturesque with steeple and spire, high roofs and quaint gables, with here and there a bit of rampart-wall or turrets or watch-towers visible. The uneven surface added to its quaintness by revealing sometimes the narrowness of the streets, with their high close houses, pends or archways leading into darker and narrower courts, sometimes antique dormer-windows, more often tall narrow shot-holes. A substantial stone-built town, with an old-world air about it; a place full of repose, which its most active prosperity could hardly suffice to disturb. An aspect of independence was stamped upon it by its situation and outward appearance; a hive of quiet industry when let alone, a very wasp's nest when roughly assailed. Such were the impressions that came into my mind that autumn morning, as I stood on the deck of the Nicholas looking into the face of this northern town.

Behind the town thickly wooded slopes shut in the view, and scattered about between lay several suburban hamlets. Away to the north, my eye rested on two massive grey spires of a weather-beaten church; and in a nearer hollow there arose a tall square tower, surmounted by an imperial crown of rare majesty.

"That is the College," said the skipper proudly, observing my gaze fixed upon the architectural crown—"the auld toun College, wi' a crown to show that it is the King's College. We have anither in New Aberdeen here that the Yearl Marischal made o'er to the toun's bairns. And d'ye see thae twa steeples?—that is St Machar's Kirk, the Bishop's Cathedral, that was in the days of Papistry. They cry out sair against the Papists, but there was good as well as ill gotten frae them, for it was a Bishop that biggit the College, as well as the Brig o' Dee, and anither built the auld Brig o' Balgownie, which lies a'maist north o' St Machar's there in the howe o' the Don."

So then learning and religion had fostered the rising destinies of this remote city—a Bishop's see and a University seat. "Why, then, if you have a college and a cathedral, you only want a royal palace to make you take rank with any city in England."

"As for the royal pailace, ahem!" said Captain Nepper loftily, "I wot weel we hae a royal pailace, and had long afore Holyrood itself was biggit. It's the Trinity Frairs nowadays, and has just been used as a convening place for the Guild brethren. But though in thae changed times we hae seen little o' the kings since Mary's time, yet if King James were coming round neighbour-like wi' a power at his back, we would make a shift to lodge him fittingly."

Away to the north lay green swelling downs, with a fringe of sandhills between them and the sea; beyond them another river, the Don, poured forth its stream to the flood; and in the background of all was a high-lying country, dotted with woodlands and cultivated fields. But my interest rather lay in the valley of the Dee, which was now opening up before us, narrow, shut in by undulating slopes, and with brown hills rising up at its extremity. We were now nearing the harbour bar, where the mouth of the river and the waters of the tide were shut in between two piers of rude masonry, that on the south side only being protected from the fury of the waves by a timber erection. Before us the river seemed to be divided into two by a long low island, with huts and scattered buildings upon it; and north of it, and lying close to the quay under the shadow of a street of old weather-beaten houses, were many vessels of all builds and varieties of rigging, from the low clumsy Dutchmen to the smart merchantmen of the Thames.

"I'm thinkin', Mr Bardolph," said Captain Nepper, coming up to me, "ye micht just as weel go below till we get the anchor dropped, and ye can land cannily withoot being fashed by curious folk. No that there is ony great risk, for ye can gie a good account o' yerself if ye were speired after; but there is a wheen o' orra curious bodies aboot when a ship enters the harbour—ye may see them wi' yer ain een on the pier-heid, like a flock o' kittiwakes watching a shoal o' herrin'—and the present magistrates are gey officious, and eager to show their zeal for King George in ony way that costs them naething. Sae I think ye wad be as weel to keep oot o' the way for a blink until the coast was clear."

The skipper's advice was too shrewd not to recommend itself to my adoption. True, my uncle's business was an explanation of my presence in Aberdeen, and the letters I had to his correspondent would satisfy the authorities that I was a lawful traveller by land and sea; but then my real mission would probably lead me into Jacobite company, which would naturally expose me to the suspicions of the Hanoverian authorities.

So I remained in the cabin, and from the stern-port took in as much of the scene as I could see. A small crowd of sailors, fishermen, and the usual ragamuffins that hang about wherever ships are to be found, followed the vessel along the pier as she slowly navigated her way up to her moorings, hailing the Nicholas in questioning banter. The peculiar accent, hard, sharp, and metallic, in which they spoke, was a strange sound to me; and though I had been able for the most part to follow Captain Nepper's conversation, much of the talk of these Aberdonians was a foreign tongue to me. Captain Nepper seemed to know them all, men, women, and children, even to their Christian names, and had a ready answer to each of their salutations.

"Port, Tammie, port your helm," cried a squat man in voluminous trousers and blue jacket of coarse homespun, whose face barely emerged from the mass of fur that did duty for a cap. "Ye'll run foul o' that Dutch dogger gin ye tak'na care, and better tae ye run doun twa Scottish barques than scrape the paint aff Mynheer. They're maisters and mair noo, man."

"Ay, but," sang out another, a tall lusty fellow in an old coat of tartan stuff, and broad blue bonnet—

"In London there is a muckle black bull,
An' he wud undae us gin he had his wull;
But we'll tear his horns over his skull,
And we'll drive the auld rogue to Hanover."

"Peace, men, peace," interposed an elderly man, who seemed to be of authority among them, and who, from his dress, plain but respectable, might perhaps be a magistrate in the city. "What kind o' language is that to haud on the open quay?—and you especially, Rob Carmyle, wi' your fule sangs, see that your back and John Justice's tawse are no made to renew their acquaintance."

"Hae ye no sic a thing as a keg o' Nantz on board, John?" cried another to the skipper. "We are a' ready for oor mornin' as sune as ye drap the anchor."

"Only a sma' runlet for the collector, honest man," returned the captain composedly, "just by way o' a propine. I suppose he'll no be up yet. I dinna see him amo' ye."

"It is at mirk midnicht the collector likes best to fa' in wi' you, John. He winna fash his thumb aboot ye when ye come sailin' in this way in braid daylicht."

"Nicht or day," returned the captain, "it is a' ane to me. The Nicholas's manifest is aye open to his inspection. Look out for this rope's end, Rob Carmyle, and be ready some o' ye to slew her round when I gie the word."

Amidst this interchange of greetings the Nicholas had been making her way along close to the quay-wall, and as she turned round obedient to her helm, half-a-dozen willing hands rapidly hauled her head round down the stream, the anchor descended with a plunge in the water, and the ship swung at her mooring close to the quay. A plank was thrown on board, and from the scurry of feet overhead, it seemed as if the whole crowd had rushed on deck to greet their friends and partake of the captain's hospitality. I was not left long to my own solitude, for soon Captain Nepper put his head in at the cabin door. "Here is Convener Lindsay, the goldsmith, your uncle's correspondent, Mr Bardolph, come to hae a crack wi' ye and get the London news, sae I'll even leave you twa and the brandy-bottle for company, while I get the hatches thrown open for thae chiels o' the customs;" and ushering in the gentleman I had seen on the quay, and placing liquor and glasses on the table, the captain again withdrew, closing the door behind him.

"You are welcome to Aberdeen, sir," said Mr Lindsay, bowing. He was a hard-faced man, whose visage might have been hewn out of a piece of the granite of his own town. His dress was that of a substantial burgess, a black cloth coat fitting stiffly to his body, and destitute of lace; his waistcoat buttoned below the waist, so that it looked like a doublet; tight breeches over which black worsted stockings were drawn up in a roll. He wore a black periwig, and carried his three-cornered hat under his arm. "Ye are welcome to Aberdeen, and to such services as I can render ye in my humble way. You will dootless have brought a letter frae your respectit uncle Mr Thirlwall?"

I handed him my credentials, which he took, and, after drinking a dram of brandy, sat down and carefully perused them, while I attentively studied his countenance to see what reliance might be placed upon him.

"Ay, sir," said he at length, carefully folding up the letter and putting it in his pocket, "ye hae landed in stirring days, and I wish ye safe through them. It is a bad time to come to Aberdeen, for there is sic news coming doun Deeside of the Earl of Mar's on-goings that folk hereabouts, for their ain safety, are obliged to be active and zealous. I daresay ye'll no have heard that the Lord Provost has armed the craftsmen, and placed cannon on the Upper Kirkgate and Gallowgate ports, and that the vintners and victuallers have been ordained to report a' strangers sojourning with them to the Town Council?"

"And am I to understand, sir, that these precautions may affect my safety?"

"Not if you are guided by my advice, which would be to make for Lord Mar's camp — gin he has ane — and that withoot loss o' time; for the toun is bound to show its loyalty, and verra naiturally would prefer to make an example of a stranger raither than o' ane of oor ain countrymen when the chance offers."

"Your patriotic feelings do you honour, sir," said I, with a sneer which I could not conceal. "I am afraid Mr Thirlwall must have miscalculated the chances of assistance you will be able to render me in my journey."

"It is my duty, and it would be my pleasure, sir," said Mr Lindsay, "to dae aught that lies within my sma' abeelity for Mr Thirlwall, or ony of his kin; but overt rebellion lies clean outside my ordinary course o' business. King James and King George are baith excellent monarchs, nae doot — verra excellent and noble kings—but be king wha likes, I'll be Rothiemurcus, as the saying goes. There has been sic changes in this toun within the memory of living man—the King and Huntly rampaging aboot the tae day, Earl Marischal and the Covenant riding the next upon our riggings; Montrose at ae time ramming the Covenant doun our throats wi' the point o' his pike, at anither fining and prisoning every citizen that daured refuse to abjure the Covenant and take the oath of allegiance. King George's friends are in power in the toun at this present moment, and I'm for them; when King James's men take their place, I'll be for him next."

"Considering the political liberality of your views, and the very proper caution which seems to regulate your conduct, I am rather astonished that it should have been through your agency that several cargoes of arms consigned to this port should have been distributed among those who, I presume, are speedily to employ them for King James. That seems somewhat a departure from a neutral position, does it not?"

"Not at all, Mr Bardolph, not at all," returned Mr Lindsay. "The arms passed through my hands in the way of business, and I made a fair profit out of them—nae doubt a' the mair that there was a risk, as was meet. It was nae concern o' mine where the arms went to or what they were meant for. Had the cargo been for King George's use, it would have been all one to me."

Somewhat disgusted by the callous commercial ethics of the Aberdonian, and mentally resolving that I should apprise my uncle of his lukewarmness in the good cause, I next inquired sharply, "Then if I am to follow your advice and proceed directly to my Lord Mar, can I depend upon you to make arrangements for my journey?"

"Unquestionably," said Mr Lindsay, with

more alacrity than he had hitherto shown; "in fact I have made all arrangements for your riding up Deeside at once. A horse and a guide, a canny gillie frae the Castletown, will be waiting for ye at the Brig o' Dee at ony hour you may like to name; and as soon as ye are past Banchory, ye may snap your fingers at King George and all his officers, —in the meantime, hem!"

Here Captain Nepper made his appearance, and on Mr Lindsay's plan being mentioned, he heartily seconded it with his counsel. "I see nae good ye can do in Aberdeen, Mr Bardolph. Ye wad find ae half the toun against ye; and the ither half that wuss well to the cause are fleyet to show their true colours, like our friend Maister Lindsay here," —here that individual uttered a deprecatory murmur, as if repudiating the sentiment imputed to him,—"but up in Braemar ye'll just be in the thick of it, and see a' that is to be seen, and maybe mair nor ye are seeking to see. Sae I wad hae ye tak' horse without delay. And, Maister Lindsay, James Keith tauld me last nicht at Dunottar that Professor Meston o' the Marischal College is to start this day for Lord Mar, sae ye'll just ca' upon him and tell him to meet Mr Bardolph quietly at the Brig o' Dee this aifternoon."

"Certainly ; if the Professor is setting out on such an errand, he will be little likely to sound a trumpet before him, and will gladly keep a quiet tryst. And, Captain Nepper, ye'll just send a boat with Mr Bardolph up by the back of the Inches, and I'll have his horse and guide waiting for him at four o'clock, post-meridian, which will be a gude time to start."

"Do you think that Aberdeen merchant is to be trusted ? " I asked Captain Nepper when Mr Lindsay had taken his departure. "He seems to me one of those cold cautious men who will favour the side that is most likely to fill his own pockets."

"Ou ay, ye may trust him safe enough. Maister Lindsay would sell nae man's bluid, for as weel as he likes the clink o' siller. But he is a cautious man, nae man mair sae, and ane that will stand weel in the favour of a' parties. I'se warrant him to serve baith sides and sell neither. Gin onybody ever fand oot the secret o' servin' God and mammon, he maun hae tauld it to Maister Lindsay. But he is prudent, and will tak' na open risk, though the deevil himself couldna follow the plots he has behind hand.

"An' noo ye maun fall to and get some breakfast, while I gang on shore and see my wife and weans, and inquire hoo the land lies, and syne I'll row ye up mysel' in the afternoon as far as the auld Brig o' Dee."

CHAPTER XI.

BEHOLD me at length, *multum jactatus ab alto,* safely landed on Scots soil above the Bridge of Dee. A pleasant row for a couple of miles up a clear swift-flowing river, that danced along with a lightness and vivacity in the afternoon sunshine, as unlike as could be imagined to the stately dogged waters of the Thames and others of my native rivers that I was acquainted with, and we had reached an ancient massive bridge, supported by seven frowning arches, black with age and now crumbling to decay. Between the arches strong buttresses, coated below with dark-green moss and above grey with lichen and weather-worn, gave a castellated look to the structure, in keeping with the battlemented watch-tower which formed the gateway to its southern entrance. I could not help remarking, that though it was closed against the south there was open access at the northern end—a symbol of the Scots tendency to migrate Englandwards to a richer and more congenial country, and keep the Southrons out in return.

"Ay, it has seen mony a fray, that auld brig, since gweed Bishop Elphinstone first biggit it," observed Captain Nepper, as he saw me narrowly examining the ancient fabric. "There was a sair fecht here in James Sexth's time wi' some of the Norlan' nobles that wadna yield to the Croun; and a dour bluidy battle when Montrose cam' here wi' the Covenant, and bonny John Seton o' Pitmedden was slain. There is a sang about him to this day, and ye may hear the lassies sing it o' a forenicht. And here we are at the trystin'-place; but I'm thinkin' we've got it to ourselves. There is neither horse nor man to be seen."

Rowing towards the northern shore as we shot through below the bridge, Captain Nepper ran the boat alongside the bank, making it fast to a stunted alder-tree, and leaped on shore, while I speedily followed him.

"I kenna what can keep the Professor?" muttered the captain, scrambling up the bank and looking with shaded eyes in the direction of the town, now hidden from view by woods and rising ground. "I hope there has been no trouble in the way. Ye maun understand, Mr Bardolph, that there are twa pairties in the toun, and the magistrates are unco anxious to show their zeal for King George, as they ca' him—no but what they wad be just as zealous for King James if he had the whip-hand; and sae there may be some difficulty in Maister Lindsay gettin' your consort and convoy towed oot o' port. But we maun just lie to a bit, until we see if they heave in sight. Ye can land, Tammie, and rax yer legs, and bring my tobacco-spleuchan alang wi' ye."

And while the captain and his lieutenant took their tobacco, scenting the air with a vile effluvium of mundungus, I lay down apart on the river-bank among the long grass, my feet almost touching the marge of the stream. The clear water gliding swiftly over its white gravelly bed had a soothing murmur in its ripples that wooed dreams, and from the grassy slopes across the river came light airs full of the fragrance of clover and the scent of wild flowers. As I lay there with my eyes fixed on the running water, time seemed to float away on its current, and all things past, present, and future were borne along with it. As from a far-distant land, came the lulled sound of the sea. A lark sang overhead, and when a cow lowed somewhere away on the uplands the tones fitted with a harmony into the others. A pleasing languor, as if I were lying on a bed of poppies, stole over me. I seemed to live apart from my life, free from thought, from care, from toil. It was a place of unconscious dreams. I was a part of nature, and at rest with her.

Such a pause on the brink of a strange and perilous destiny is as years in a man's life; and I have often, long afterwards, recalled that dreamy drowsy rest by the side of the Dee, and all its features have come back to me with the vividness of reality. I still hear, as I pen these lines, the ripple of the river and the low of the herds echo in my ears. I smell the thyme and clover, and a rich odour of heather-bells floats in the air. And even the mundungus of the captain and Tammie—what, can it be possible? Pish! 'tis only the Vicar with his everlasting pipe passing the open window, coming to prose upon Mr Whitefield's ridiculous extravagances, or upon a rumoured rising in the Highlands in favour of—well, the Pretender. That obnoxious whiff of tobacco has put the hands of time up nearly forty years.

But I still wait dreaming by the Dee through that golden harvest afternoon, hardly conscious where I am. The captain and Tammie respect my reverie, of which I am indeed almost oblivious; but there they are, nevertheless, anxious to hand me over to my future custodians, and get back to the Nicholas. Frequent are the looks they cast Aberdeenward, and a shade of anxiety comes over the skipper's face as he rises, and, hitching his breeches, strolls up to a little knoll a few hundred yards away from the bridge, where he stands with his hands shading his eyes, looking intently along the road from Aberdeen. Tammie seizes the opportunity to refill his pipe from the captain's bag of tobacco, and coils his legs more luxuriously beneath him. And as for me, I reck not, listening only to the siren murmur of the Dee.

"Sail ho!" suddenly sang out the skipper. "Get Maister Bardolph's wallets oot o' the boat, Tammie. Here comes twa riders wi' a led horse, hot haste by the Craiglug. Rouse yourself, Mr Bardolph. You've had your nap, and boot and saddle is the word now. Here comes the Professor and his man, carrying as much sail as if half-a-dozen revenue cutters were in their wake."

Here was a rude awakening from my dreams; fairyland faded away, and the rough bustle of active life came jarring upon my senses. Ascending the bank to where the captain was standing, I saw the new arrivals come riding up at a smart pace—a tall clerical-looking personage in black riding-coat laced with tarnished silver, and a servant with a led horse fully saddled and bridled. The latter, a clumsy-looking countryman, who sat on his high demi-pique saddle with the grace of a wool-bag, kept ever looking backwards over his shoulder, as if he had some apprehension of pursuit.

"Ye are late at the trystin', Doctor," was the captain's salutation; "but you're welcome all the same. This is your fellow-traveller, Mr Bardolph, an *honest* gentleman who has business up Deeside, and will be glad of your company."

"I regret, sir, that I should have detained you," said the new-comer, raising his hat. "Convener Lindsay has told me of you, and you have also been recommended to me by my good lord the Earl Marischal. I need hardly say that the pleasure of a gentleman's company of Mr Bardolph's urbanity and polite breeding is a welcome mitigation of the asperities of our rude hyperborean roads;" and the Doctor bowed once more to his saddle-bow.

At first glance I was on the point of conceiving a dislike to my new companion. His features were roughly cut; a massive wrinkled brow overshadowed deep-set grey eyes, which looked you through and through, and which seemed to have a cynically critical cast; high cheek-bones and a prominent nose, whose colour was suggestive of a convivial temperament, sadly out of keeping with the grave cast of his countenance. The mouth was heavy and sensual-looking. He wore a black periwig of a cut that used to be in fashion before the Revolution, but had not been seen on the Mall for half a score of years at least. His demeanour was suggestive of the Scots

Presbyterian clergyman. He might have been the redoubted Andrew Cant himself; and all my native prejudices prepared me to find him a pragmatic, bigoted, faithless, and disagreeable guide. How far my first ideas were just will be seen in the course of my narrative, for Doctor Meston and I were thrown much together by circumstances during my memorable sojourn in Scotland.

"Your arrival this morning has set the toun in a lowe, skipper," he said, turning towards Captain Nepper. "The worthy bailies will have it that you had King James himself on board, or at least the Duke of Ormond. The Provost has been rummaging the haill city in search of strangers; and had I not been able to plead my Lord Marischal's commands to join him at Dunottar, we had scarcely got through the Nether Kirkgate port. Ye'll hae to say your catechiz when you get back, John."

"I'll say them," said the captain, doggedly; "and never fash your thumb, Doctor. Baith my bill o' lading and my passenger list are a' aboon board for them. The bailies ken better than to meddle wi' me. I hae ower mony dealings wi' them for that."

"Mair than King George weel wots of," returned the Doctor; "but there is a better day coming, John, and when the honest man gets his mare again ye maun even turn ower a new leaf, John Nepper—make a *tabula rasa*, man, and pay a' king's dues, customs, and excise."

"Faith, I see mony pleasanter prospects in a Restoration than that," retorted the captain. "The best thing aboot the Usurper is, that ye can cheat him wi' a clear conscience, and are even spoiling the Egyptians. There is Bible warrant for that, Doctor."

"Nae doot," responded the other, drily. "But it fears me, John Nepper, that *Tros Tyriusve* as ye are, the Crown of braid Britain will be little benefited by your contributions to excise or customs, whether James or George hae the luck to wear it."

"Ye're a wise man, Doctor; a' Aberdeen,

to sae naething o' the Mearns, weel allows that," said the skipper, with an air of mock reflection ; "and I wadna say that ye may be in the richt. But ye'll drink King James's health, just by way o' *doch-an-dorris*, in a dram o' gweed Nantz that never paid a penny to the Elector. Tammie, bring forth the pocket-pistol."

Tammie drew forth from the intricacies of his nether raiment a huge stone bottle and horn rummer. The captain brought out the cork with a smack, re-echoed from the lips of Tammie, and decanting a huge potation, quaffed it off to the health of King James and the confusion of all his enemies. The beaker was next offered to the Doctor, who courteously insisted that I should be first served. When I had done justice to the toast, the Doctor, holding out his hand for the bottle, handled it lovingly as he filled the cup.

"A goodly *œnophorium*, a comfortable *amphora*. My respects to you, captain, and a noble freight to the Nicholas some day soon. *Slaint a Righ Hamish*, as the Hielandmen say; and that reminds me, Captain Nepper, that the sooner we set about his Majesty's service the better."

And dropping the *amphora*, as if from sheer absence of mind, into one of the capacious pockets in his riding-skirt, the Doctor gathered up his reins and trotted towards the bridge, much to the discomfiture of Tammie, whose jaws fell at seeing his turn to have a pull at the bottle thus unexpectedly interrupted. I hastened to comfort him by a gratuity for his services to me, and to take my leave of the skipper.

"Ye're ga'en to a strange country and an outlandish people, Mr Bardolph," said that worthy man, "and I wish ye well through wi' your adventure; and if sae be that ill suld come o' this ploy, and ye find it needful to get clear o' the country, forget not to speir for John Nepper at the Shore-head of Aberdeen, and it will run hard wi' the

Nicholas if she canna gie ye a cast across the water."

"Peace, corbie!" cried Doctor Meston from the end of the bridge. "*Absit omen.* Don't fore-speak us in our enterprise, thou tarry-breekit *haruspex.*"

"By no manner o' means, sir. A' luck gae wi' ye, and weel befa' the gweed cause. But what has come o' the gillie that was to guide Mr Bardolph, that Mr Lindsay spoke of?"

"The loon is fast in the Towbuith by this time," said Meston; "a farmer from Echt, whose stirk he had driven away, raised the hue-and-cry against him as we were getting to horse, and the last I saw of him was tearing along the Gallowgate wi' a' the rabble of Bon Accord at his breekless hinderlans. But my man Dauvit Wobster shall attend on Mr Bardolph.

"And now, Mr Bardolph," said the Doctor, "with your permission we'll even put spurs to our nags and ride while they are still fresh. We have a long journey before us, and until we reach Aboyne we are not quite safe from impertinent molestation by some over-zealous Whig we may chance to hap upon,—although, thank heaven, every mile of our journey reduces the number! So we'll ride while the evening's young, and make each other's better acquaintance while we breathe our horses. What say you?"

On my signifying my assent, we crossed the bridge at a half gallop, and turning westward, powdered along a fairly good road, having the river on our right. On our left the land sloped away to the southern horizon, with a goodly expanse of well-tilled fields and numerous cottages and farm homesteads. Before us the country seemed to get more wooded as we advanced. But what chiefly caught my eye was the far prospect of tall mountain-peaks which stood grandly out in the westering sunlight. Their bold outlines rested darkly against a pale golden sky; there was solitude and awe in their brown masses; and yet they stood in dusky and reserved peacefulness looking down the valley. It was hard to think that in these grand solitudes so vulgar a game as politics was being played. What was a being so transient as George or James to that grand rock-crowned monarch that had stood there immovable while the centuries glided by; that had seen the kings and the nobles of earth come and go like the flies of a summer day; that had marked the smoke rise from the mangled bones of the victim upon the grey altar of the cruel Druid, the incense wafted at the Christian shrine?—and now one was gone even as the other; but the mountain still sat in his imperishable majesty. I felt like a sacrilegious profaner of the temple of Nature, going into these solitudes on such an errand as mine,—a second Actæon, to meet, perhaps, Actæon's deserved fate. I should have gone as a poet, as a pilgrim. Well, and after all, was I not something of both?—for somewhere among these mountains—I wished I could guess where—my Bess was, I hoped, to be found expecting me.

CHAPTER XII.

The dusk of an autumnal evening fell upon us as we were riding through a rugged tract of country girt in by low hills and darkened by pine-woods, which my companion told me was Lumphanan, the scene of the slaughter of Macbeth, the Scottish monarch whom the genius of Shakespeare has rendered immortal beyond all other kings of the Scots. We had crossed the Dee at a village called Banchory-Ternan, where we had hastily baited our horses and refreshed ourselves, and then pushed on; for, according to Doctor Meston, the baronet of Leys, who was lord of the place, was unfavourably disposed to King James's cause, and might not improbably interfere with our journey.

"When I say," said the Doctor, "that that wolf in sheep's clothing, that perverter of the sacred rights of Episcopacy, that Jack Presbyter masquerading in a bishop's rochet, the umquhill Gibbie Burnett, by the divine wrath and the deil's favour Bishop of Salisbury, was a son of that house, I presume you will understand that we need not trouble Sir Thomas's hospitality. He did, to be sure, show some signs of grace in resisting the unhallowed Union between the countries; but what is bred in the bane—ye know the old adage?"

So we did not tarry at Banchory, but took horse speedily again, and rode briskly along among the lengthening shadows. The sun had already disappeared behind the western mountains, leaving behind him a track of golden clouds which had bathed the hill-tops in a halo of glory, soon fading away to a light green sky, so transparent as to make you think that you could see far into infinity beyond. The moon rose up behind the hill of Clochnaben, bringing out into black relief a huge mass of rock on its summit; but the glow in the western sky still vied with her beams, and thus we rode on in the witching light betwixt night and day.

I wish I could recall all the road we traversed in the journey of that autumn afternoon. The Professor was an admirable guide, and there was no bold or striking feature of the landscape that he did not name. He had the history of every old castle on the tip of his tongue. He could recall the genealogy and the exploits of every baron or laird through whose lands we passed; and his remarks showed him to be a man both of ingenuity and wit, though tinctured, as it seemed to me, with the gravity due both to his profession and his nationality.

We were riding along a rather rough and uneven road bordered on both sides by peat-bog, and Doctor Meston had just pointed to a cairn which from an adjacent hillside loomed greyly in the dusk, as the last resting-place of the regicide Thane of Cawdor who usurped the throne, when an exclamation from our follower recalled our attention to the way before us. Out of a dark clump of firs into which the road passed, a few hundred yards ahead of us, rode a small troop of horse, perhaps fifteen or twenty strong. To evade them was impossible, for we should have foundered in the bog on either side of the road in the darkness, and to have turned back was to invite pursuit, and our horses were already pretty well beaten out. Matters looked desperate, and I slackened my sword in its scabbard and began to look to the priming of my pistols.

"Stay," cried Meston in a low voice, "hold your hand. We will try a fair parley here. We are no match for their numbers. Let me speak for us both; and you, ye chattering poltroon, daur to open your mouth, except to say what I tell ye, and I'll leave your corpse in that bog there for huidie-craws to pick;" this last to his servitor, who was showing signs of great trepidation, and a disposition to fly.

"Perhaps they may be friends, after all," muttered Meston to himself, as a horseman galloped up in advance of the rest, and wheeling round his horse, barred our advance with a presented pistol.

"Stand and say where ye ride so late!" was his challenge. "And for whom are ye—King James or King George?"

"'Under which king, Bezonian?'" muttered the Doctor. "Lord send I chance upon the right one. We are travellers," said he, raising his voice, "and bound for Aboyne on our private affairs. Our loyalty is well known, and need not be questioned."

"But loyalty to whom?" impatiently interrupted the cavalier, with a menacing gesture of his pistol-hand, which made me seek my holsters. "Ye are doubtless aware that there are two parties in the country, and ye pass no further this way until we have seen what papers ye have about ye."

"I see my Lord Errol," cried Meston joyfully, as the rest of the troop rode up. "Your lordship will vouch that I am a faithful servant of King James, I am sure?"

"What! the learned Professor from the Marischal College, the wittiest boon companion in the braif toun," said a gentleman at the head of the troop, as he peered through the gloom. "A true man, Delgaty, and honest to the soles of his boots. We need not stop him. We thought you might be a King's messenger with summonses from the Secretary of State, who is said to be going the rounds."

"I suppose ye are for Braemar, Professor?" said the Earl, pulling up his horse alongside of us, "and design to add your wisdom to the counsels of the Lieutenant-General. Troth, 'tis a quality that is not altogether unwanted there."

"I bear despatches for the Earl Marischal, my lord; can you tell me where his lordship is likely to be found?"

"I left the Marischal and Mar together at the Castletown this morning," replied the Earl, "and they purpose to be at Aboyne to-morrow to meet with certain well-affected noblemen and chiefs who have arrived in the country to concert concerning the King's affairs; and if you be guided by my advice you'll tarry there for them, for Craigievar and the Forbeses are out upon the Muir of Dinnet seeking to cut off communication between Braemar and the Lowlands. But they did not seek to steer us, though Delgaty was anxious to try a brush with them, but hung about the skirts of Culbleen like a litter of tods [foxes] watching a fold. And so, God be with you, Professor; and *au revoir*, for I must ride. It will be the small hours of the morning ere we reach the plainstanes of Aberdeen."

"And now," said the Professor, when we had once more resumed our journey, "this meeting has been fortunate, for we can rest to-night at Aboyne, and meet the lords to-morrow. And, indeed, it would have been a long ride to the Castletown, or Invercauld, or wherever Lord Mar may be, to say nothing to the risk of falling into Craigievar's hands, who would have seized our papers, if not our persons, since he is out a-colonelling for the Elector of Hanover."

"And how far may Aboyne be?" I asked, for my horse was now beginning to require more and more of the spur, and the ride had lost its novelty and charm, now that darkness had set in.

"In little less than an hour we shall reach Charlestown of Aboyne. I have brought you rather a roundabout way since we left Banchory, for I believe the King's messenger, of whom Lord Errol spoke, has taken that road with the Unicorn Pursuivant, with summonses to a number of the barons and chiefs to appear at Edinburgh and enter into ward there. We should likely have come up with them at Kincardine-o'-Neil; and as it is, we shall get the start of them. Doubtless they will not venture above the Pass of Ballater; but if they do, they are likely to speedily wish themselves safe south again."

"Is there any accommodation to be had,"

I asked, "in this village? How call you it? Charlestown?"

"There is a decent hostelry, the Three Boars' Heads, kept by a worthy woman, Tibbie McVey, whither we shall betake ourselves. Doubtless the well-known hospitality of Aboyne Castle would welcome us as friends to the King, but there are so many persons of rank in the country that it might happen to be already crowded. And my Lord of Aboyne wishes well to the cause, and more especially my lady. His lordship is a man of politeness and elegance, and hath the poetic gift of his grandfather in no small measure. I have had the honour of exchanging verses with him."

"I am indeed fortunate beyond my expectations in having a poet for a travelling companion," I said. "Although no stranger to Professor Meston's reputation for weighty learning and wit, I was not aware that he was a minister of the Muses."

"In a humble way, sir, a very humble way," returned the Professor, in tones of gratified depreciation; "a mere swineherd on Parnassus am I, who tune my pipe in unison with the grunts of the herd which surrounds me. I have indeed striven at times to imitate, *sed longo intervallo*, the inimitable satires of that scintillating star of wit, the immortal Hudibras, and to picture our Scots Jack Presbyter in all his native parts of bigotry, folly, hypocrisy, and conceit. Sir, it would give me great pleasure, time and occasion serving, to read you certain fragments of my 'Knight of the Kirk; or, The Adventures of Sir John Presbyter,' which I have in script about me, and to have thereupon the cultivated judgment of one who hath enjoyed congenial intercourse with the rare geniuses of the Augustan age of her late Majesty."

I made due expression of the pleasure such an intellectual refection would afford me, and inquired whether his Muses condescended to the Attic speech of England, or adhered to the severe and unadorned Doric of the north, in which case my imperfect acquaintance with the Scots tongue would be apt to mar my enjoyment of the beauties of his verse.

"Like Ga'in Douglas of yore, I may speak of myself as 'knapping na Southron bot my ain langage.' My efforts have hitherto been confined to interchanging doggerel, both Scots and Macaronic, with an occasional essay in the tongue of Maro, with such loftier geniuses as Alexander Robertson of Struan, the gifted and gallant chief of the Clan Donnochy; the learned Doctor Pitcairn, now departed; my friend William Sutherland, and other kindred spirits. The Kirk has banned such pleasant exercises as unprofitable and licentious, and such desolation hath Presbytery and the Covenant spread broadcast over a land once devoted to the liberal arts and the *belles-lettres*, that Scotland hath produced no poet since Hawthornden, and no painter since George Jamieson, now nearly a weary hundred years ago."

I said I trusted to have the pleasure of reading his poems in print; and then, with a little pardonable swagger, I added that it would give me great pleasure to bring the work, when published, under the notice of my friend Dr Arbuthnot, or Mr Pope, or the Dean of St Patrick's.

"Ah," said Meston, with a sigh, "these are names that make the heart beat quicker at the mention of them, even on this wild hyperborean muir amid the shades of night. My poor lines are too rugged to please the polished refinement of the author of the 'Rape of the Lock' or the 'Essay on Criticism,' but the great Scriblerus might perchance deign to acknowledge some distant relationship between my Knight of the Kirk and the Jack of his own immortal 'Tale of a Tub.' Indeed I blush not to say that I owe not a little of my own inspiration to that fertile source. And so you know the poets and the wits, and have doubtless dropped your own fancies into the Lion's Mouth. Hast ever wooed the Muse and found her kind?"

I diffidently confessed that I had tried my hand at verses; that my "Ode to Celia's Eyebrows" had been praised by Mr Prior, and handed round the circle at the Grecian coffee-house; and that, at the request of the Cocoa Tree, I had imprinted my Menalcas a Threnodic Eclogue on the death of his late most sacred majesty King James. I mentioned these matters, not out of vanity, or from any overweening sense of the merit of these pieces—they were well thought of by men of spirit in the Queen's time, but I marvel not that they should have been since forgotten amid the debased tastes that have overshadowed polite literature in these latter days of ours,—I mentioned my poems, I say, not out of boasting, but as forming a bond between myself and a person partial to similar pursuits. And I had reason to rejoice that I did so, for I could perceive that I greatly rose in consequence in the Professor's estimation.

"Now Apollo be praised," he exclaimed,

"who has brought us thus together! A visitor from that bright and shining world of wit and poetry comes to us in the dull north, where we only hear and marvel afar off—comes to us like a ray of sunshine to a Laplander in winter. And we shall even make a 'nox Attica' of it at Tibbie McVey's, where, if the vivers are suited more for the *dura ilia messorum* than for the taste of an Apicius, and if for Falernian we must drink usquebaugh, we shall not fail for salt to our conversation. And I shall read thee my latest macaronic, conscious as I am of its weakness; but it is not given to us all to write a *Polemo Middinia.* Dauvit! Dauvit Wobster, I say," he cried, turning in his saddle and calling to his serving-man, "did ye pit that shagreen leather book in my valise?"

"And that did I no," answered the man, trotting up to us. "Troth, I see little use that the like of it wad be till us nowadays. It is Andrew Ferrara for the keeliveenpen, and the powder-flask for the inkhorn. Lord grant that the gallows be not the end o' it!"

"Would you were hanging from it at this present moment!" cried the angry Professor. "Did I not particularly tell you to put that shagreen volume, written in my own hand, in my riding-bags, while you were to send the rest of my books to my Lord Marischal's lodgings?"

"I dinna mind," said Dauvit, doggedly.

"Dinna mind! Don't you mind, sirrah, that I told you a night or two bygone, when I was with Commissary Gordon, the Civilist of the King's College, and had been reading to him from that very book — in proof whereof the Commissary averred that he had not laughed so much since he read 'The Whig's Supplication'—mind ye not that I told you pointedly then that the book was to go with me? Did I not say so, and that in the Commissary's presence?"

"Ye may hae done so," responded the

imperturbable Dauvit—"ye war baith gey fou."

"*Nebulo ac furcifer!*" cried the enraged Professor, whose horse pranced as he threatened Dauvit in the darkness. "When thou knowest there was but a shilpit chappin of Rhenish between us."

"I ken weel enough there was nane left, whatever there micht hae been at the beginning. There wasna as muckle remainin' in the stoup as wad hae drouned a midge."

"*Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*" grunted Meston. "In troth, I know not what keeps me from beating thee, even to the effusion of thy vile gutter blood."

"Na, na, Professor, hard words brak nae banes, and I heedna them, but aff hands is fair-play. And what needs there be sic a fuss just aboot leavin' a bit bukie ahint? I'm thinkin' it is tools o' anither kind that will be mair in request belive."

"And that is true, though the fool hath

spoken it. *Inter arma silent camœnæ,*" said the Professor, smoothing his ruffled temper. "And ye may, perhaps, Mr Bardolph, have reason to be grateful to David's habitual carelessness, which hath spared thy ears the rude accents of my Norland rhymes."

I was profuse in regrets, which perhaps I did not feel so acutely as I did the cravings of a more carnal appetite for a substantial supper, and a glass of wholesome wine to wash it down with. The exercise and the keen Highland air, combined with the fasts I had undergone on board ship in my days of sea-sickness, made me very sharp-set, and it was with much inward satisfaction that on rounding the shoulder of a low knoll I saw beneath me a few faint lights twinkling in the darkness.

"There lies Aboyne," said Meston, with a wave of his hand; "and from the number of lights on the muir, we are evidently not the first arrivals. The retainers of the lords and the Highlandmen are most likely bivouacking there. We shall be in luck if we can find a bed to lay ourselves upon in the midst of this muster. And now we shall at least hear the news of what is going on."

CHAPTER XIII.

On our first arrival at the inn, it seemed as if a bed was the most unlikely request that could be preferred. In front of a low white straggling building at the end of the one street of which the village seemed to consist, were gathered a nondescript-looking group of grumblers, who were vainly endeavouring to obtain admittance and accommodation. Their clamours were replied to by a buxom serving-wench, who, keeping one stout arm firmly behind the door, assured them over and over again that every room in the house was crowded, and that as for beds the floors would not accommodate half those already inside who would have to lie upon them.

"The hoose is panged baith but and ben;

haud back, wi' a wannion tae ye!" she cried, as seizing one more forward than the rest, who endeavoured to thrust himself inside, she made him reel backwards among his fellows. "There is no standin' room for a tangs left in ony place inside. Troop aff wi' ye, and no keep me standin' here idle, or faith if ye bring Tibbie out she'll sune clear the coasts o' ye."

"Come, mistress, can ye no gie us a dram at the door, at ony rate? Here hae we ridden a' the way frae Dunottar, across the Cairn o' Munth, and the deil a bite or sup has crossed our craigs since we put our feet in the stirrups."

The speaker, a tall brawny man, dressed in the old-fashioned costume of Commonwealth days, a buff coat and a rusty steel cap, endeavoured to get his shoulder within, as he addressed the girl.

"Atweel," said she, "it is a lang ride, and ye maun be dry. Gin ye gie me your word ye winna seek in yerself, and will keep the door again thae chiels, I'll see and get a dram for ye."

"That's a sonsie lass," said the yeoman, "and see if ye can lay your hands on some vivers at the same time. Onything that comes handiest, for we are no dainty. Sae stand back, callants, for I munt sentry here."

As the man turned round and faced the crowd, Meston recognised the speaker, and called out to him—

"Where is your master, Barclay? Where is my Lord Marischal?"

"In the castle wi' the other lords, sir," said the man, with a nod of the head to the Professor; "and troth, if ye want a bed, I think ye had better go there yourself, for there is no a chair to sit down upon here."

"And that is short welcome," said the Professor; "but call the woman of the house. Call Tibbie McVey to speak wi' me."

"Tibbie is here," and in another instant the temporary sentry was relieved of his guard, by being hurled into the middle of the throng.

"My Lord Mar bespoke a bed for you and the ither gentleman, Doctor Meston, an' sair work hae I had to keep it for ye. A Lowland lairdie frae Fife wad thrust himself into it, reason or nane, although I tellit him the bed was bespoken. He is in the kitchie fletchin' the lass for paper to plaister his head wi'—the feckless wonner! to mak' sic a wark about a broken sconce. But licht, Doctor, licht, and come ben wi' your friend there, and tak' sic accommodation as the times and this steer will allow o'. And you, some o' ye idle losels, tak' the gentlemen's horses, and shak' doun a lock o' hay for them in the muckle barn. No you, ye thievin' vaigabond, ye're ane o' thae reivin' Morven cateran; the gentleman micht hae to ca' a' the corries in Cromar for his naig by the morn's mornin' gin ye got your hand upo' the bridle. Haud aff wi' ye, as lang as it is weel."

The Highlander who in his tattered native costume had proffered to take my horse, now slunk back, and at Meston's request the buff-coated trooper took charge of the animals, while we followed the hostess inside.

In a long kitchen flagged with stone, under smoke-stained rafters, were closely packed together some thirty or forty persons, who seemed to be in the middle of a protracted carouse. Some had succumbed to their potations, and were sleeping with their heads among the jugs and drinking vessels, on the rude wooden tables; others had fallen from their seats, and were either lying extended at full-length on the floor or half-leaning back upon the chairs from which they had slipped. The survivors however, unaffected by their loss, chattered, sang, and shouted across the bodies of the prostrate, and ever and anon thumped the tables with the pewter measures, and shouted with stentorian tones for fresh supplies. They seemed rather the followers of Bacchus preparing for the conquest of the Indies, than the nucleus of an army destined for invading England. It was one of the old orgies of King Charles's cavaliers revived in this eighteenth century, although the revellers had little of the airs of either courtiers or king's followers. There was a fair sprinkling of men dressed in the garb of Highlanders, who were the loudest, the most noisy, and most quarrelsome of the congregation; but the majority wore the ordinary garb of our English rustics, and were probably Scots squires of one sort of condition or another. On the great hearth a roaring fire of peat and logs was burning, before which two stout damsels were roasting large pieces of meat, and attending to several big caldrons suspended over the flames.

"Follow me, gentlemen," said our hostess, a tall masculine woman, with a green shawl crossed over her shoulders and a large not over clean linen cap concealing her hair and framing her flaming red cheeks; and she led the way through the throng, easily elbowing aside any one who chanced to be in her way. "I've kept a bit o' supper for you in the spence, for whaever comes or gaes, my Lord Mar's orders maun be attendit to."

We followed her along a dark passage, at the end of which she pushed open a door and stood aside to allow us to enter. As I was next, I paused at the sight of a little party within, which contrasted strangely with the scene of revelry and dissipation through which we had just passed. A meek-looking little man, with a big wooden-boarded Bible spread upon his knee, was reading the Scriptures in droning nasal tones to three or four sleepy-looking children. The passage selected seemed to be strangely inapt for the education of youth; but the worthy had probably just reached it in the course of his regular reading.

"*And Solomon loved many strange women*," he drawled, "*and he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.*"

"A sorry Solomon ye wad hae made, aw'm thinkin'," said the hostess, pushing past me; "but gae oot o' this wi' yer Whiggery, and mak' room for the gentlemen to get their bit supper. And what are ye doin' dawdling here wi' the bairns? Did I not tell ye to be aff to the stell at Craig Ferrar and bring me ither twa anker of distilled waters? Answer me that, John Bain."

"I can find nae warrant for gaein' to Craig Ferrar for whisky to Papist and Prelatist rebels, limmers that wad pollute the pure word o' God wi' white sarks and whistles, and sing their messes and colics in our verra kirks. Is it not written, 'I have caused wine to fail from the wine-presses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting'?"

"Unless ye tread to Craig Ferrar this blessed moment wi' the horse for thae twa ankers, I'se gar ye shout to some tune. A single word frae me tae Inverey an' his Hielandmen, wha are drinking and driving o'er ben the hoose there, an' ye will sune wear a sarkfu' o' sair banes and the best paid skin o' ony man on the run o' Dee this nicht. Swithe, and off wi' ye, or I cry ben the hoose."

"I go, gudewife, I hasten," cried the landlord, nervously starting up as his wife turned towards the door, and seemed about to summon the Highlandmen. "I'll be back belive wi' the whisky. The deil gae doun their thrapples wi' it!" he was heard to mutter, as, deftly evading an expediting buffet from his partner's fist, he took his way into the darkness; "but they will get their kail through the reek afore they gang far, or thance I'm muckle mista'en."

When the room was cleared, a substantial supper was speedily set before us—a dish of beef-steaks, or collops, as they are called here, a noble haunch of venison, which the landlady told us had been sent by the Earl of Mar specially for me, and a brace of succulent-looking moor-fowl, roasted on the brander. Upon these, flanked as they were by a fair bottle of claret and a pint measure of unexcised brandy, we lost no time in making a stout attack, while Meston, as we ate, endeavoured to glean from the landlady some account of what was taking place in the district.

There had been a great gathering, she said, at Aboyne a week ago, and many lords from far and near, and chiefs from the west Highlands, had met with Lord Mar. They held a council, and the Earl wanted them to rise at once for King James; but some of them were distrustful, and would not call out their men until they got the king's own word for it. And then Mar took out a letter from the king naming him Lieutenant-General, at which many of the lords wondered, and some disbelieved the letter; but be that as it might, the Earl had ordered them to turn out to the standard; and some had gone home to bring out their men, and the fiery cross had been sent up Glengairn and through Donside, and as far as Strathbogie; and the Earl then went to Glenlivat to call out the clans of Lochaber and Badenoch. There had been great hunting-parties going on in the Forest of Mar, in which many of the lords had stayed to take part; and the whole of Braemar as one man, from Dinnet to Braeriach, were arming to restore King James, who was speedily coming over the water with a great army of Frenchmen and Spaniards, who would make short work with King George's folk.

"And no afore time," concluded our hostess, "for atween King and Kirk there is neither peace nor quaitness in the country. Ye canna gie a puir gangrel body o' a Papist priest a bit bite in the by-gaein, but the minister and the session maun hear o' it, and the greater and the lesser excommunication for trafficking wi' mass-mongers are the civilest words in their head. And no a month back, when the Baron o' Braichley in his daffin bude reason or nane to hae a kiss ootside the door when I was handin' him the stirrup-cup, and round comes Mess John wi' threats o' the cutty-stool an' a fine to the kirk-session for my licht behaviour, as he ca'ed it. 'Saul!' says I, 'ma birkie, gin ye cock me on your cutty-stool it will be the dearest pliskie to ye ye hae ever played. Ye forget that I hae kin in the Burn o' Vat and ayont Culbleen that will gie ye licht enough to read yer catechiz by afore ye made a wordle's fairlie o' ony ane of the gude name o' McVey, even though she suld be the wife o' a whingeing cut-luggit Presbyterian body like John Bain.' An' sae he just groaned and gaed his ways."

"Never mind, Tibbie, my woman," said the Professor; "these lanthorn-chafted chiels who hammer upon human nature as if it were a Culross girdle, will soon have to take to the bent with their Covenant again, and ye shall have a kindly curate who will read the prayers and the lessons, and maybe play a spring on the fiddle to the lads and lasses at an orra time. And you will get absolution in a neighbourly way, instead of having the frailties of the flesh held up to public scandal. And he will pluck John Bain from the errors of Knox and Calvin as a brand from the burning, and maybe make him clerk yet, who knows."

"Atweel, if ever John Bain gets to heaven, I wot it will be because the deil disna think him worth the pains o' pickin' up. Set *him* up, indeed, to meddle wi' affairs o' Kirk and State, and read the Bible as if he understude it," said the landlady with a toss of her head. "But I wish he were back wi' the usquebaugh, for the folk frae abune Ballater wud drink Loch Kinnord itsel' dry if it were filled frae bank to brae wi' usquebaugh."

The clamour and shouting from the kitchen here recalled our hostess's attention to her other guests, and with an injunction to "cry ben" if we wanted anything more, she took her departure.

"An honest woman, Tibbie," commented the Professor approvingly, "and a tried friend to both Jacobites and Nonjurors, whom she hath often entertained more for love than for the lawing. But, alas! Mr Bardolph, in this divided house ye see but a type of our distracted kingdom of Scotland."

And Meston with a deep-drawn sigh filled himself a cup of brandy, which he proceeded to sip meditatively.

"'A house divided against itself cannot stand,'" was my rejoinder.

"True, and a fall there will be, and that speedily. But to foretell which side of the edifice is to weather the storm needs more prophetic lore than I can lay claim to."

"You have then your misgivings about the success of this undertaking?"

"God knows such an enterprise is not to be lightly entered upon. Many lives and estates will be sacrificed in the course of the struggle. And the innocent people, both Highland and Lowland, who have no more conception of the cause for which they are going to contend than that it is the will of their lord or chief, will be the greatest sufferers. True, it hath been the fate of the *plebs* in all ages to be the pawns in the game of war. *Mutum ac turpe pecus*, it is true they are; but it is not for me, who am come of them, to set light by their feelings. There are great honours and broad lands, names made august and venerable by centuries of Scottish history, put in jeopardy; but there are also wives' hearts and the children's bread thrown into the arena. And though we may crown King James the Eighth in Westminster Abbey, and install a bishop before the high altar of St Machar's Cathedral, I fear sore these successes would bring but small comfort to those who mourn for a breekless Donald or a blue-bonneted Sandy shot down by the Southron bullets, and lying cold in Lowland mools."

"With such sentiments as these, sir, I am rather surprised to find you an active partisan of civil war."

"Nothing surprising in it," returned the Professor, refilling his cup; "but let me recommend Tibbie's brandy. It will correct the crudities of the claret you are drinking, and make an excellent preface to bed. But as for myself, I am a native-born Scot, and over-proud of my country to see her disappear from the annals of the nations and become a part and parcel of England, just as if she were one of your Yorkshire Ridings or the Isle of Wight. The boast that your great poet makes that England never stood at the proud foot of a conqueror might with more propriety be used by Scotland, for she alone of all peoples *in orbe terrarum* saw the backs of the Roman legions, and sent Cæsar's eagles to seek a roost nearer home. I say nothing. I pretermit all mention of our victories over the Edwards, for such a subject would not be agreeable to you as a Southron to hear, nor proper in me as a Scotsman to boast of. But what arms could not force arts have effected, and Scotland has every year been shorn bit by bit of her pristine power, until at last the sword and sceptre, crown and ball, and all the appurtenances of kingly dignity, have been reft from her, and her Parliament, that dates from the days of King Finnan, who swore for himself and his posterity, a hundred and twenty years before the birth of our Saviour, that the king should do nothing of moment without the consent of his estates, has been huddled up into a neuk at Westminster to say ‘Amen’ to the rogues that cut the head off King Charles, and to be jeered at as Norland nowt when they open their mouths. The deil reward them that ever made sic a sacrifice o’ their country. But of this I am sure, that in the year of grace sixteen hundred and three, had it been foreseen how the guise was to go, there were men in this country who would have given King James's thrapple an ugly thraw afore ever he passed the bounds of Berwick to put on the crown of England.”

“But is there no love for the Stuart family—for the person of the exiled king?”

“Doubtless. The Stuarts, with all their goods and ills, were our own people, and we have as much love for King James as we well could have for one who is so far away, and whom few of us have ever seen. But it is because King James represents deliverance from so many difficulties that so many different bodies of men are ready to draw the sword for him. We prelatists and nonjurors see in him the champion of an Apostolic Faith and our deliverer from Presbytery, which in this north country at least was forced down our throats at the Revolution. The puir Papists hope at most for toleration from a king of their own creed, and if they expect anything more they keep it to themselves. The Highlandmen miss the money that used to come to them in Queen Anne's time; the chiefs can no longer maintain their men, and must take the field through sheer necessity. The ancient nobility find themselves out of date in this new world, and they and their titles are held but lightly of by the English. Besides, the civil wars have so impoverished many of them that they have little to lose except their lives, and everything to hope for from a rising, and the commons throughout the country are disgusted with the Union, and hope that with the auld line the auld crown may be restored to us. And there are many ancient feuds and grievances and claims, that just incline people to civil war as the best means of getting redress for them."

"And do you think that a revolt based upon such diverse grounds can be conducted to a successful issue?"

"'God shaw the richt' has always been Scotland's motto, and surely a cause founded on natural justice and patriotism must recommend itself to the God of battles. But I have little skill in my Lord Mar for leader. He wants the confidence of the clans, and some of the other nobles look askance at his elevation. The Marquis of Huntly has no experience in war, but the Gordons never take well with a second place; give them the command, and I warrant you will find them forward enough. My good lord and pupil the Marischal is young, but with a rare head for the ordering of armies. We read Polybius his history together, and much insight did the young heads of him and his brother give me into the sense of the old Grecian soldier. Young James Keith, whom ye saw at Dunottar, will make a great generalissimo some day, if ever God gives him the grace to command."

"And are there no trained soldiers who can aid Lord Mar by their military experience?"

"There are Generals Gordon and Hamilton, both tried soldiers; but what such an army as will be gathered together in these mountains requires is an *anax andron*, a natural leader of men, more than your commander who works by the rule and the square; and that it fears me sore we shall not find in Bobbing John, as the Earl of Mar has been to-named. But this I aver, that could the grave give back John Grahame of Claverhouse for a short six months to head the men in these northern shires, King James would be reigning in London before Pasch passes by.

"And now," concluded Meston, "one cup more to Church and King, and then for bed, which you will doubtless welcome, Mr Bardolph. We may have work before us tomorrow."

To this I gladly agreed, for the long mountain ride and the full fresh air of the hills had provoked a feeling of comfortable drowsiness. Our hostess was again summoned, and taking us outside, conducted us by another door into some other region of the house, where we found a humble enough chamber with two beds completely enclosed in wooden frames waiting for us. A glance round satisfied me that the accommodation was clean enough to satisfy such fastidiousness as my fatigues had left me, and I speedily prepared to go to rest.

"I shall just look through the house and see if I can meet any one who can give us further news," said Meston, depositing the stoup of brandy, which he had providently brought with him, on a rude wooden table; "if there is any truth in the adage *in vino veritas,* the intelligence should be trustworthy. And just keep your sword handy by you, Mr Bardolph, for though you have nothing to apprehend here, some drunken Hielandman may come palmering in upon ye, and they are apt to be camstairy in their cups."

Thus left alone I threw myself upon my couch, and revolved upon the strange events of the day and night, which coursed through my mind with bewildering and confused rapidity. Here I was at once, as it were, dropped in the midst of a wild and barbaric country, on the very verge of war, the destined companion and ally of the rude savages of whose revelry I had been a witness. Would a rebellion in this obscure corner of the kingdom shake the throne of Great Britain? Would these undisciplined Highlandmen stand the shock of the veterans of Marlborough and Stanhope? The idea seemed preposterous; but the fact that they were preparing for such an attempt remained all the same. What report was I to make to my uncle? How was I to discharge the responsible mission with which I had been intrusted? To ridicule Lord Mar's undertaking would be to divert from it all chance of sympathy or assistance from London. To raise any false hopes in the minds of those who had commissioned me, would be to bring their persons and fortunes into indirect peril.

Perplexed by such disquieting thoughts, I turned my mind to softer meditations. Surely I must soon behold my adored Bess, clasp her in my arms, and extract from her sweet lips a complete avowal of that which half confessed had raised my hopes. I must be near her now. Though my knowledge of her home was very vague, yet I knew it was somewhere in Lord Mar's country, the borders of which I had apparently reached. Perhaps she might still be the companion of the Countess of Aboyne—perhaps I might see her to-morrow. Even now she might be looking at that star which through the little window I could see twinkling brightly over the dark hill-top. And as she looked at it she might perchance be thinking of me, even as I was of her. Yes, I was sure she was, and my heart was just sending a message to her through that bright silent orb, when my toils fairly overcame me and I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

I WAS roused from a restless slumber—in which dreams of being tossed about on board the Nicholas of Aberdeen in a tremendous gale, while Bess Farquharson stood on a rock like a siren, with lute in hand, vainly beckoning me to her, and of Bishop Atterbury and Dr Meston attired in kilts, fighting a broadsword and target combat, were confusedly mixed up —by a clamorous noise in the next room, which seemed to be made up of singing, fighting, and quarrelling, to which the clash of steel and the clattering of glasses supplied a burden. It was a minute before I could remember where I was and realise the position I was in. Sitting up, I glanced at the other bed, and could see by the faint moonlight that it was empty. I thought I could recognise the voice of my fellow-traveller in the next room. I listened as I sat up in bed, and sure enough, among the babel of voices, some of which spoke in a language quite unknown to me, but which I supposed to be Erse, the tones of the Professor, loud, dictatorial, and pugnacious, were easily to be made out. Sleep in the neighbourhood of this hubbub was an impossibility, and getting up and throwing my coat loosely about me, I went to a partition, through the broken chinks in which some beams streamed in from the scene of revelry.

It was a curious spectacle. Round a table, the head of which was graced by a huge bowl of steaming punch, sat more than half a score of gentlemen, Highland and Lowland, in full carousal. At the head of the board sat a big man in green coat and scarlet-laced waistcoat, ending in a tartan kilt of the country, his long broadsword hanging on the back of his chair. By his side was the Professor, but *hei mihi! quantum mutatus*—how different from the grave and formal companion of my ride from Aberdeen. His wig was awry, and over it his hat was cocked rakishly on one side; his face wore an expression of boon conviviality which Rabelais would have loved to look upon; and his eyes were sparkling with the vinous excitement of thorough enjoyment; his right hand held aloft a brimming beaker, while his left emphasised his remarks with frequent blows upon the table.

"Let me hear no more such recriminations," the Professor was saying magisterially; "let the man who first mentions cattle-lifting in the present company be excluded from all benefit, present and future, in the punch-bowl—*monet Sithoniis non levis Evius*—and take not the comparison amiss, for the Thracians, like you Hielandmen, were a bold and warlike people. We are here a' ae man's bairns, a' gude and dutiful subjects to King James (his health and speedy restoration to his kingdom), and sae let us drink and gree, like gude fallows. I'll sing you one of my own songs."

"Cot! I'll sing one mysel'," cried a Highland gentleman, and immediately began bellowing at the top of his lungs—

"Awa' wi' Prince Hanover,
The plack dog o' Hanover;
We'll ca' a nail intill his tail,
And ship the whalp at Dover"—

the while Meston, with a look of lofty contempt at the interruption, handed in his glass to be replenished by the president.

"I agree with oor gude freend the Professor," said a little wizened-looking Lowlander, whose antique and frayed costume told that the march of fashion had passed him unheeded for several generations. "This is a solemn occasion. We have assembled here to concert measures for the restoration of oor lawfu' king, and not to amuse ourselves as it were at a Truil Fair or a Bulls' Market. Now I have mountit my followers——"

"Your followers, Dockinloan!" interrupted

Meston the pacific, with a sneer; "and hoo mony may they be, pray?"

"The herd loon and the barn man," put in another.

"With the laird himsel' as cornet and trumpeter to the troop, baith in ane."

"Under your favour, Monaltrie, and yours, Tullochcoy, a Hieland and a Lowland laird are very differently rated. You stand by the numbers o' yer bare-leggit gillies and kernes; we by the number of the tenants fully equippit that we can put on horseback. And ye maun alloo me to tell ye that a laird o' Dockinloan was never used to pit his fute in the stirrup wi' less than twenty men ahint him, all 'graithit in effeir of weir,' as runneth King Robert the Second's Charter of Dockinloan to my ancestor, Laurence Pyot of happy memory."

"Ye had barely as many as that wi' the Covenanters at the battle of the Craibestane, laird."

"There was ower mony for the estate,

Doctor. King James has his uncle's confiscations to thank for the loss o' ten gude horsemen frae the lands o' Dockinloan."

"King James's cause is sure, since an auld Whig like Dockins has taken him in hand," said one of the Highlandmen, who seemed disposed to make a butt of the laird. "The restoration is certain."

"Silly drivelling idiot!" was the comment of Meston, who seemed bent upon quarrelling with the laird.

"Tuts, tuts, Doctor," said the president; "who was preachin' peace in lang-nibbit Latin terms barely five minutes syne? Never mind him, laird, and tak' aff your dram. We'll a' fecht oor best for King James, an' a' the men o' the Mearns canna dae mair than they dow."

"And as for Whiggery," retorted the laird, "I'm thinking oor gude freend the Professor wasna slack to take the oaths to the hoose o' Hanover, when his patron the Lord Marischal providit him wi' a chair in the new Tounis College of Aberdeen."

"Ass! Bœotian! idiot!" roared the Doctor, who had been rapidly mounting to the quarrelling point of intoxication. "Am I, a Magister Artium of the Marischal College, and a Regent in the same to boot, to be thus insulted by a cut-luggit nowt o' a bonnet-laird, who sat in the last Scots Parliament, no' even as a lesser baron, but as a petty burgess commissioner for the burgh of Foggieloan?" and Meston, drawing his rapier, lurched across in the direction of the laird, who, sulkily ensconcing himself behind a chair, drew his sword also.

To my surprise not one of the company stirred to pacify the disputants, but sat calmly looking on, and seeming to enjoy the altercation as an excellent joke.

"A fair field, laird," cried one; "come out from behind your chair."

"Take my targe, Doctor," said another; "the laird has made a sconce for himself. It's on the wall there, forninst ye."

'Peace, peace," said the president; "indeed the gentlemen maun be allowed to settle the business their ain way."

But as Meston made a lunge at the laird, a fresh combatant appeared upon the scene at the first clash of steel. Tibbie McVey, the hostess, made a rush at the combatants, and as the laird happened to come first in the way, she seized him by the collar and hurled him against the wall with all the strength of her powerful arm. In another instant the Doctor was confronted by the virago, and compelled to fall back before her menaces.

"Gin there be ony fechtin' here," she cried, "ye may count on me as mids-man. I'll beetle the first man that draws a sword in my hoose, be he Hielan' or Lawlan', till there is nae a haill bane in his body. And you, ye cratur," she added, turning furiously upon the laird; "gie me yer sword this minute, or I'll tak' it frae ye and brak it ower the back o' ye!" and she made a rush at the least offending of the two, with a clubbed fowling-piece belonging to some of the company, which she caught up from the wall, and fairly driving the laird into a corner, compelled him to surrender his weapon at discretion.

"And you, Doctor, awa' to bed wi' ye," she recommenced, turning to Meston, who had seized the opportunity to resume his seat and his punch; "no ae drap mair shall ye hae this blessed nicht. That tongue o' yours is sae learned that naebody can bide it when the maut is bunemost; and sae ye'll just hae to come your ways wi' me. I wonder at ye, Inverey," she added, addressing the president; "to let men fecht as if they war in a feein'-market, an' a great Sassenach gentleman, a freend o' the Yearl, lyin' sleepin' close at hand in the neist room."

"Troth, Tibbie," said Inverey, "when blude is hot, the best thing is to let it. I've aye found that myself."

"Aweel, ye can a' cool in the skins ye got hot in, for the deil anither drap o' usquebaugh shall cross this door threshold the nicht, or my name's no Tibbie McVey. Sae come yer ways, Doctor, and I'll see ye pitten to your bed, in case that ill-deedie corbie o' a Dockinloan should seek to steer ye."

In truth, Tibbie's proffered assistance was not unnecessary, for the excitement had put the copestone to the effect of his potations, and the last glass, which he had drained after he sat down, had laid his head prostrate on the table.

"Ay, ay, Tibbie, my doo," he stuttered as the hostess got him on his legs, "I'se go wi' ye. I bid ye good night, Inverey and gentlemen all, *Vale pancratice aut si mavis athletice.* And, gentlemen," he added, turning at the door, with a look of portentous gravity, "we are met here on the king's affairs, and I trust ye will exercise a prudent discretion with regard to the wine-cup, *Lenite clamorem sodales, et cubito remanete presso.* Gently, Tibbie, my bonnie woman. He who goes softly goes safely, know ye not?"

I hurried back to bed, and pretended to be asleep, as the hostess led in the Doctor, and with her strong arms tossed him lightly into his bed, clothes and all, and throwing a coverlet over him, took her departure. In a few minutes more nothing was to be heard except the snoring of the Professor and the murmur of voices in the next room, where they now seemed to be talking in their native Erse, in lower and more serious tones; and once more fatigue got the better of me, and I fell asleep.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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